



IOM International Organization for Migration
OIM Organisation Internationale pour les Migrations
OIM Organización Internacional para las Migraciones

STATEMENT

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Dear Mr. Chairman,

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) appreciates the opportunity to address this Committee today in relation *inter alia* to the Secretary General's report on "Trafficking in women and girls" (A/63/215) and is particularly pleased that this report focuses on two issues close to our heart, namely partnership and cooperation at all levels, as well as victim protection.

Mr. Chairman,

The feminization of international migration is a contemporary feature of international mobility, and nearly 50% of the world's migrants are now women. Many women today migrate independently of their families in response to a wide range of labour demands and occupational opportunities, and we recognize the potential for greater autonomy and self-determination enjoyed by this increasing numbers of women around the globe. But while we are encouraged by this general empowerment of women through migration, we must be conscious that migration also has a darker side that disproportionately affects women by as much as 80%, particularly those being recruited for jobs in the most unregulated sectors. Women may also face limits to mobility due to low levels of education, limited socio-economic independence, inadequate resources and support networks, leaving them more vulnerable to exploitation and human traffickers. Human traffickers often target children and young women, and their ploys are creative and ruthless. According to some estimates, about 800,000 of these vulnerable migrants are trafficked across national borders every year, so while national responses are a crucial element to fight trafficking in persons, no state or government can address this global phenomenon in isolation. Because of its cross-border nature, national responses to trafficking in persons need to be complemented by bilateral or regional responses. Furthermore, given that trafficking in persons is a multi-dimensional threat, depriving people of their human rights, freedoms, and harming their physical and mental health, no actor can successfully address it in isolation. Here multilateral organizations can usefully assist committed governments seeking to meet international standards for combating human trafficking, and are particularly effective when drawn from the unique and comparative advantages of the respective agencies. However, as the Secretary-General points out in his report "*efforts have been made to strengthen action and coordination among a range of different stakeholders and to enhance bilateral and multilateral cooperation – but despite these developments, trafficking in persons persists*". So it is crucial to continue this fight, even more forcefully, more coherently and with better coordination.

Mr. Chairman,

One of the weapons we can use in this fight is to increase and further refine technical cooperation and capacity development with governmental partners and civil society organizations. In this regard, it is equally important that methodologies and achievements in the field of counter trafficking activities are evaluated and analyzed in order to be able to continually improve interventions. As such, IOM has been producing a number of tools for the use of partner organizations and practitioners, such as the Handbook on Direct Assistance for Victims of Trafficking and the recently published Handbook on Performance Indicators for Counter Trafficking Projects.

Mr. Chairman,

Trafficking in persons is a serious crime that requires a principled approach in addressing victims' assistance and IOM looks at it within a broader migrant protection framework. Much remains to be done to fill the implementation gap that still hamper a comprehensive and rights-based response: Cultural and language barriers may make it difficult for trafficking women to gain legal recourse and necessary health services. In addition, their legal status in the country of destination may subject them to erroneous detention and deportation rather than providing them with the services they so urgently need. As trafficking patterns often follow broader migratory patterns it can be increasingly difficult to distinguish those migrants who are trafficked from others who may not have been trafficked but have similar protection and/or humanitarian needs. While data collection and research on trafficking of women and girls remains an under-documented form of violence against women, the lines we draw between trafficked persons, exploited migrants, and smuggled migrants who may, or may not, be destined for exploitation, can be exceptionally thin. Certainly distinguishing between these different migrant categories has important implications in terms of criminal prosecution, so why should it matter in terms of protection? At the moment, to positively define one person as a victim of trafficking means that he or she may be eligible for reflection delays, safe accommodation, psychosocial support and a raft of other forms of assistance now available. But a migrant – especially if she doesn't fit our stereotype of a victim – is unlikely even to be screened for possible trafficking and/or exploitation. Is it logical to base such a disproportionate response on the fine and imperfect lines between a smuggled migrant, a stranded migrant, an exploited migrant, or a trafficked person? Is it not more reasonable to base our response on the degree of need?

So, while IOM emphasises the continued need to improve victim identification practices, we wish to make note of the importance of providing protection and assistance to all migrants in need. We believe that this approach will allow us to focus our energies and resources more appropriately on responding to the specifics and severity of the exploitation suffered by all migrants.

To conclude, Mr. Chairman, IOM is committed to those most vulnerable, especially in times of crisis and remains dedicated to working resourcefully and proficiently with governments and agency partners.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.