

**Expert Group Meeting on "Trafficking in women and girls"
Harrison Conference Center, Glen Cove, New York, USA
18 to 22 November 2002**

AIDE MEMOIRE

I. Background

The Division for the Advancement of Women is organizing an Expert Group Meeting on "Trafficking in women and girls" which will take place in New York, USA from 18 to 22 November 2002. The Expert Group Meeting will form part of the Division's preparation for the forty-seventh session of the Commission on the Status of Women, which will address as one of its thematic issues women's human rights and elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls as defined in the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. The results of the EGM will also be relevant to the session of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice in 2003 which will address, among other issues, trafficking in persons, particularly women and children.

Trafficking of women and children is inextricably linked with violence against women and women's human rights and is clearly addressed in the Beijing Platform for Action under Strategic Objective D3: Eliminate trafficking in women and assist victims of violence due to prostitution and trafficking. The Platform, adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women (1995), also called on Governments to consider the ratification and enforcement of international conventions on trafficking in persons and on slavery; and to take appropriate measures to address the root factors, including external factors, that encourage trafficking in women and girls for prostitution and other forms of commercialized sex, in order to eliminate trafficking in women and girls.

The twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century" in its outcome document, reaffirmed measures to be taken by the Governments contained in the Beijing Platform for Action and recognized that gender-based violence: *inter alia* sexual abuse; sexual slavery and exploitation; international trafficking in women and girls; forced prostitution and sexual harassment; as well as violence against women resulting from cultural prejudice, racism and racial discrimination, xenophobia, pornography, ethnic cleansing, armed conflict, foreign occupation, religious and anti-religious extremism, are incompatible with the dignity and worth of the human person and must be combated and eliminated. The World Conference against Racism affirmed the "urgent need to prevent combat and eliminate all forms of trafficking in persons, in particular women and children, and recognize(d) that victims of trafficking are particularly exposed to racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerances".

Trafficking in women and girls has also been an important focus of attention within the United Nations system, the international community and non-governmental organizations, as well as at the regional and national levels. A number of special rapporteurs of the Commission on Human Rights, both thematic and country specific, have also addressed the issue. The Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of

Human Rights takes up trafficking in persons through the activities of the Working Group on Contemporary Forms of Slavery. More than 120 Member States signed the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. As of May 2002, 11 countries had ratified the Protocol.

The complex and global nature of trafficking and the seriousness of related issues, such as repatriation of victims, requires a coordinated approach to combating the problem. Resolutions on the problem of the traffic in women and girls have been adopted by the General Assembly, the Commission on the Status of Women, the Commission on Human Rights, and the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice. That Commission has developed a Global Programme against trafficking in human beings, especially women and children which includes field projects in a selection of countries to test promising strategies, such as new structures for collaboration between police, immigration, victims' support and the judiciary, both within countries and internationally (linking countries of origin to destination countries). The General Assembly, in its resolution 55/67, also encouraged the sharing of knowledge and best practices in dealing with the problem of trafficking of women and girls and requested the Secretary-General to compile, as reference and guidance, successful interventions and strategies in addressing the various dimensions of the problem based on reports, research and other materials from within the United Nations, including the United Nations Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention, as well as from outside the United Nations. The Division's Expert Group Meeting will seek to compile such a guide for submission to the Commission on the Status of Women at its forty-seventh session.

II. Objectives

In order to achieve a coordinated approach to combating trafficking in women and girls, it is necessary to identify strategies and programmes which have been shown to be most effective. It is also necessary to establish means by which such "best practices" may be applied in a variety of situations and with the most effective results. The Expert Group Meeting will seek to facilitate coordination and linkages between existing and future strategies and programmes by focusing on the issue of best practices in combating trafficking of women and girls.

The EGM will form part of the preparations for consideration of the thematic issue of "women's human rights and elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls" by CSW at its forty-seventh session and in accordance with the terms of General Assembly resolution 55/67.

The expert group meeting will discuss best practices in combating trafficking in women and girls with **a particular focus on initiatives taken at the national level** and taking into consideration the following key areas of concern:

- The contributory factors in trafficking in women and children and strategies to address these factors.
- The increasing association of racial and social marginalization with trafficking and the affects of these factors on women who have been trafficked.
- The impact of immigration laws on trafficking and migration.
- Strategies and provision of remedies and redress for victims and access to justice, including witness protection.
- Human rights protection for victims of trafficking.
- The issue of repatriation for victims of trafficking and possible consequences thereof.

III. Expected Outcome

The Expert Group Meeting will provide input to the consideration of women's human rights and the elimination of all forms of violence against women by the CSW at its forty-seventh session. Based on its deliberations it will also produce a document on best practices in this area from international, regional and national experiences.

IV. Method of Work

The Expert Group Meeting's discussions will be based on background papers prepared by the organizers, a consultant and the experts. It will work in plenary session and in smaller working groups based on the major issues identified. A report will be adopted by consensus.

V. Profile of Participants

The Expert Group Meeting will be attended by ten (10) experts and one (1) consultant, appointed by the Secretary-General of the United Nations. DAW/DESA will provide travel and daily subsistence allowance to the experts and the consultant. In selecting the experts, the criteria of geographical and gender balance will be respected. The participants will be drawn from a variety of fields and expertise.

VI. Documentation

The documentation for the meeting will include background papers prepared by a consultant and the invited experts. Government and United Nations representatives will be invited to contribute inputs from their perspectives. The expert group meeting will be conducted in English only.