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Strengthening international cooperation in preventing and combating trafficking in persons and protecting victims of such trafficking

Report of the Secretary-General

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* E/CN.15/2008/1.



I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 2006/27, entitled “Strengthening international cooperation in preventing and combating trafficking in persons and protecting victims of such trafficking”, the Economic and Social Council, condemning trafficking in persons as an abhorrent form of modern-day slavery and as an act that is contrary to universal human rights and convinced of the urgent need for broad and concerted international cooperation among all Member States, employing a multidisciplinary, balanced and global approach, invited Member States to provide assistance and protection to victims of trafficking in persons and to assist in their reintegration, to employ a comprehensive approach to combating trafficking in persons and to set up mechanisms for coordination and collaboration between governmental and non-governmental organizations. The Council also requested the Secretary-General to report to the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice at its seventeenth session on the implementation of the resolution.

2. Pursuant to that request, on 12 November 2007 the Secretary-General sent a note verbale to Governments inviting them to submit information to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime by 15 December 2007 on their efforts to implement the resolution. The present report contains an analysis of the replies received from States and is based on information received by the Office as at 24 January 2008.

II. Results of the survey of Member States

3. Replies were received from 23 States and one regional organization, as follows: Belarus, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cuba, Czech Republic, El Salvador, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Japan, Jordan, Liechtenstein, Mauritius, Philippines, Myanmar, Netherlands, Niger, Oman, Poland, Qatar, Romania, Slovenia, Ukraine and the Arab League.

4. The present report supplements the information contained in previous reports on responses by Member States to trafficking in persons, especially the report to the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice at its fourteenth session entitled “Strengthening international cooperation in preventing and combating trafficking in persons and protecting victims of such trafficking” (E/CN.15/2005/8) and the reports to the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime at its second session (CTOC/COP/2005/3 and Corr.1) and its third session (CTOC/COP/2006/6) on the implementation of the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.

A. Ratification and legal provisions

5. Respondents stressed the importance of the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (General Assembly resolution 55/25, annex II), in the formulation of a consolidated global

response to trafficking in persons. The responses received from Member States describe action taken with a view to ratification or accession and give examples of subsequent efforts to translate their obligations under the Protocol into national legislation and practice. However, action taken towards the criminalization of offences set forth in the Protocol – trafficking in persons in all its forms – and the fulfilment of other obligations have varied considerably. Of those Member States reporting that they had already ratified the Protocol,¹ not all had finished the process of drafting and adopting specific legislation.² Other Member States indicated that they were in the process of ratifying the Protocol.³ Some States, while not yet having ratified the Protocol, indicated that their domestic legal system made provision for the specific criminal offence of trafficking in persons or for a set of offences corresponding to elements of that crime.⁴ Legislation against specific forms of human trafficking was also noted in the reply of Qatar. In 2005 Qatar passed laws prohibiting the recruitment and training of children for, and their participation in, camel racing.

6. Some States reported on the penalties imposed for trafficking in persons.⁵ Penalties were varied, ranging from a fine to 15 years' imprisonment with or without confiscation of property. In general, the majority of responses indicated that the legislation reflected the requirements of the Protocol to treat trafficking in persons as a serious crime with corresponding penalties. Ukraine reported that it had passed legislation in 2006 to increase the liability for offences of trafficking in persons. In many jurisdictions, the criminal code contained provisions on aggravated forms of the offence of trafficking in persons. Typically this included cases where the crime was committed against a minor, with the definition of the age of majority ranging from 14 to 18 years, but also where the victim suffered grave consequences or the crime was committed by a criminal group. Croatia reported that its most recent legislative amendments establish the criminal liability of a person who knowingly uses the services of victims of trafficking. In addition, a number of States referred to other types of crime that would typically be prosecuted along with cases of trafficking in persons.⁶ Several States reported that an offence of trafficking in persons was a predicate offence for money-laundering offences in their jurisdiction.⁷ Many States stressed in their responses that legislative measures were an integral part of a broader framework of prevention and suppression and support for victims.

7. A large number of responding States noted that they had either ratified or signed the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.⁸

¹ Belarus, Bulgaria, Croatia, El Salvador, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Myanmar, Netherlands, Oman, Philippines, Poland and Romania.

² Estonia, Jordan, Niger and Oman.

³ Liechtenstein.

⁴ Czech Republic and Japan.

⁵ Belarus, Bulgaria and Latvia.

⁶ Bulgaria, Cuba and Estonia.

⁷ Bulgaria, El Salvador, Estonia and Japan.

⁸ Bulgaria, Czech Republic, El Salvador, Estonia, Hungary, Japan, Liechtenstein, Mauritius and Niger.

B. Enforcement

Difficulties in establishing the extent of the problem

8. Providing accurate figures or estimates on the scope of trafficking in persons continued to be a difficult task for many countries. This was due in part to the fact that (a) a crime of trafficking in persons for all forms of exploitation was not yet included in the criminal code and therefore only some forms of trafficking were reported, and possibly under other types of crime; (b) codification had not yet advanced; or (c) the provisions were new and therefore crime statistics were not yet available. Thus, a number of States reported that their crime statistics did not cover some or all forms of trafficking in persons. Although replies from Member States reflect a growing awareness of the seriousness of trafficking in persons among the often numerous State agencies charged with some responsibility in countering the crime, respondents offered only limited general information on the trafficking situation in their countries and few details of trafficking cases investigated and prosecuted.

9. Estonia noted that one of the objectives of the current development of a register of criminal and procedural information was to obtain an accurate overview of the scope and use of criminal offences related to human trafficking activities. It was hoped that, among other outcomes, information might be collected on foreign criminal proceedings related to human trafficking where the victim or perpetrator was a citizen or permanent resident of Estonia or cases of human trafficking that became evident through the consulates and embassies of Estonia.

Enforcement measures

10. Reports were received of ongoing cooperation with other countries in the investigation of the transnational aspects of trafficking offences,⁹ and there was a clear indication that operational action and systems were being developed in most countries. It is, however, unclear from the information provided whether the number of investigations is increasing, or whether such investigations increasingly result in the conviction of offenders. Specific enforcement measures, actions and results reported by responding States are set out below.

11. With regard to ensuring the security and control of travel or identity documents, Belarus and Estonia noted that the scrutiny of passports and other travel or identity documents by border guards to identify falsified documents was one important action, along with transportation-related checks and observation of persons passing border points. Japan reported that to ensure the security and control of travel or identity documents, the Passport Law had been amended in 2005 to prevent the production of a forged passport and the illegal use of a passport by incorporating an IC chip into passports. Further, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had developed a wide area network in which the Ministry, its overseas establishments and other ministries and agencies concerned were connected to exchange information on visas. Latvia noted that since 2007 it had issued passports consistent with the requirements of the European Union regarding biometric data.

⁹ Very few of the responses offered detailed information on the numbers of trafficking cases investigated and prosecuted. The figures provided did not make it possible to put the number of trafficking cases into perspective in the respective countries.

12. Croatia reported that from 2002, when a national human trafficking strategy was established, to January 2007, a total of 65 trafficking victims had been identified. Of those, 6 were identified in 2005 and 13 in 2006. In 2007, 11 trafficking victims were identified.
13. Cuba noted enforcement action for exploitation-related offences committed within the country, as well as the prosecution of 112 individuals between 1999 and June 2004 for either human trafficking or smuggling of migrants (transporting persons from Cuba).
14. El Salvador reported that in 2005, 32 cases of human trafficking were investigated, leading to the arrests of 53 people, of whom 18 were prosecuted. In 2006, 67 cases were investigated, with 56 persons arrested and 37 prosecuted. In 2007, 39 cases were investigated, 30 persons were arrested and 6 were prosecuted.
15. Estonia reported that it regularly exchanged information with other countries and international investigative agencies concerning possible cases of human trafficking and that it had carried out several investigation activities within the framework of requests for legal assistance received from Sweden and Finland.
16. Many States had responded to the increasing challenges through the creation of special police units to deal with cases of trafficking in persons.
17. In Hungary, a specialized unit had been established in the National Bureau of Investigation to investigate and coordinate cases of transborder trafficking in persons. Domestic cooperation with local-level police authorities included exchange of information and experience, while joint investigations had been launched with, among others, police in Austria, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Norway, Switzerland and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.
18. Greece reported that it had established 14 anti-trafficking police groups in 2005 whose operations covered all its territory. During the period from 2003 to 2006, there were a total of 244 human trafficking cases, with 980 offenders arrested; 494 victims were identified in the same period. Two major cases were noted, each resulting in the dismantling of an international criminal organization dedicated to the commercial sexual exploitation of women.
19. Japan reported close coordination and cooperation between its Immigration Bureau, National Police Agency and related institutions on cases of trafficking in persons. Cooperation with foreign law enforcement authorities facilitated the arrest of brokers in source countries, the provision of information on such persons and operations for the handover of any Japanese national abroad for whom an arrest warrant for trafficking in persons had been issued by the Japanese police. Japan also noted the ongoing conduct of a regional seminar in South-East Asia since 2002 with the aim of enhancing cooperation in child trafficking investigations.
20. Liechtenstein reported that it had no knowledge of any cases of human trafficking in its territory.
21. In Myanmar, the National Working Committee to combat human trafficking was formed in 2002 to identify and prosecute traffickers and to provide special protection to victims. An anti-trafficking unit was established in 2004 with 40 trained police officers. Currently, there are 18 local anti-trafficking task forces under the anti-trafficking unit in strategic locations throughout the country. From

July 2002 to October 2007, there were 1,037 cases of trafficking in persons, with 2,078 offenders and 5,513 victims rescued.

22. The Netherlands reported the establishment in 2005 of the Expertise Centre for Human Trafficking and Smuggling, which is a result of collaboration among the National Criminal Investigation Team, the National Criminal Intelligence Service (both of the National Police Agency), the Royal Netherlands Military Constabulary, the Immigration and Naturalization Service and the Social Security Information and Investigation Service. The responsibilities of the Expertise Centre include the provision of operational and strategic analyses and information to all partners in the chain in order to achieve more effective investigation processes.

23. The Philippines reported the deployment of victim assistance workers in three regions to coordinate support and assistance for victims. This included coordination with criminal justice workers through the development of protocols to ensure support for victims through all stages of the criminal justice system. As of June 2007, 315 victims had been assisted in the three trial areas. Among other forms of assistance, they received orientation on their rights as victims and related laws, as well as counselling and the provision of transportation and food.

24. Romania noted the importance of encouraging the provision of information to law enforcement authorities. Of 551 calls to a telephone help line, 36 concerned suspicions of human trafficking transactions to destination countries including Belgium, Cyprus, the Czech Republic and Italy. Following notification of the authorities, investigations revealed eight trafficking situations.

25. Enforcement action in Ukraine included the reporting of 350 human trafficking offences under the Criminal Code in 2007, while 16 organized criminal groups working in the area were shut down and 76 criminal cases that involved human trafficking were initiated.

C. Training and seminars

26. Training was highlighted by more than half of all respondents as a key component of national efforts to successfully counter trafficking in persons. Most responses on this topic placed training within the context of a structured national strategy, translating legal provisions and national action plans into practical action. Training programmes were aimed at increasing the knowledge base of professionals of all agencies that needed to address the trafficking issue, such as the police, border control agents, the judiciary and social and health workers. Countries reported on the preparation of curricula, training materials and manuals and on past and ongoing training and seminars. Training efforts mainly targeted specific professional groups and the specificities of trafficking in persons. Respondents indicated that specific training had been offered, often both in a general format for all police officers and as specific training for specialized units. Such training often also involved other departments and members of civil society. Training and seminars reported were evenly divided between ad hoc and regular activities.

27. Some mention was made of training events addressing the international aspects of trafficking and being conducted in a regional context or with the involvement of officials from other countries. International training was often

organized in cooperation with United Nations entities and other international and regional organizations. In addition, training and seminars supported efforts to provide a more comprehensive response to trafficking in persons. Several countries reported on different types of training courses that had been organized for mixed groups, involving police officers, border police officers, social workers from social welfare centres and other persons working in expert teams, together with members of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), teachers, community workers and other members of civil society. Many countries noted the identification of victims of trafficking in persons as a key subject.

Specific training activities reported by Member States

28. Belarus reported that a training programme for human trafficking specialists had been conducted by the Academy of the Ministry of Internal Affairs since 2005. Additional training sessions had been developed and run by the Academy for others involved in the migration sphere and combating human trafficking, including law enforcement officials and NGO and government representatives.

29. Bulgaria reported that the training curricula of the National Institute of Justice included seminars and training courses on combating trafficking in human beings, emphasizing specific investigation requirements. Corresponding training was provided each year, jointly with various partners, to judges, prosecutors and investigators as part of both the initial and continuous training provided to magistrates and others.

30. Croatia reported that it had conducted numerous seminars to raise the awareness of key professional groups about trafficking in persons, including police officers, diplomatic and consular staff, judicial officials, social workers and NGO representatives. Concurrently, for the specific purpose of more effectively identifying possible victims, 26 police officers had undergone specialized training and had subsequently been posted throughout the country's police departments to deal with all problems pertaining to trafficking in persons.

31. The Czech Republic reported that it had conducted multi-agency training as part of campaigns in 2005 and 2007 addressing sexual exploitation, with actors including refugees workers, police, social workers and justice officials.

32. In El Salvador, training and workshops relating to trafficking in persons had been conducted for targeted purposes. For example, domestically, workshops had been held with the aim of improving the prosecution of cases of trafficking in persons by enhancing inter-institutional coordination, while the participation of migration and consular officials in training sessions coordinated with other countries and international organizations had been arranged, within the framework of a regional conference on migration.

33. Estonia noted, among diverse training initiatives, a preventive training programme aimed at social workers, school psychologists and probation officers.

34. Hungary reported that several intersectoral training sessions had been organized in recent years for police personnel, social workers, health professionals and teachers. Those activities were aimed at sensitizing the target groups to recognize trafficking and included information on victim identification and support.

Hungarian police also participated in regional training programmes and helped elaborate a manual for police personnel on victim identification and protection.

35. In Greece, in support of trafficking-related training programmes, the police had produced and distributed widely a number of documents detailing the implementation of the national law, practical information on victims' rights (translated into 13 languages) and an advisory note with specific questions for officers to ask when undertaking preliminary investigations into possible trafficking cases.

36. Japan reported that its prosecutorial training on trafficking in persons instructed prosecutors to investigate and pursue indictments for trafficking crimes vigorously, as well as to treat victims and witnesses with respect throughout investigations and trials, pursuant to the Convention and the Protocol.

37. In Latvia, regular training for criminal justice officials is conducted under its national human trafficking strategy, both to improve work with victims and to facilitate intersectoral cooperation. In parallel, in 2006, as part of an ongoing programme, specialized identification and referral training was provided to 769 social workers, judges, police and other relevant specialists.

38. In Myanmar, a multidepartmental mobile training team on trafficking in persons was formed in 2000. The team has since trained more than 500 service providers from throughout the Government and across the country. A national seminar on new trafficking legislation was held in 2006 to facilitate implementation and cooperation among the criminal justice sector, civil organizations, government departments and NGOs.

39. The Netherlands noted current specialized training in the gathering of evidence in cases of trafficking in persons for police, special investigation services and the Public Prosecutor Service.

40. The Philippines conducted specialized training for social workers in targeted regions on issues including trauma management, mentoring, criminal justice processes, human rights and other matters relating to the recovery and reintegration of victims of trafficking in persons.

41. Poland reported conducting multi-agency training sessions for police, border guards, prosecutors, judges and employment and welfare officials on official processes regarding witnesses or victims of trafficking in persons, resulting in the production of a series of textbooks on trafficking in human beings over the last two years.

42. Romania reported that specific training activities relating to trafficking in persons were conducted for military staff deployed for peacekeeping operations or other international missions. The training sessions covered trafficking-related issues, such as characteristics of the phenomenon, consequences for the victims, guidelines for victim identification and procedures to follow when a victim is identified. Over 3,800 Romanian military staff to be deployed to Afghanistan, Iraq and Kosovo (Serbia) received training.

D. Prevention and awareness-raising

43. Awareness-raising and information campaigns were the main activities organized by States in the field of prevention. Respondents mentioned various related initiatives and that these awareness-raising activities and campaigns were considered a key element of their comprehensive national strategies to prevent human trafficking. Campaigns were often organized in cooperation with NGOs, the media, governmental agencies, including law enforcement, and international and regional institutions to raise public awareness about the dangers of human trafficking. The campaigns had an educational purpose as well as a preventive one. Awareness-raising efforts included media campaigns (television, radio and print), but awareness was also raised and information disseminated at the grass-roots level through education systems. Campaigns to promote reductions in the demand for services provided by victims of trafficking have started to attract increased attention.

44. States including El Salvador, Estonia, Japan, the Niger, the Philippines and Qatar reported awareness-raising activities directed at parties responsible for responding to human trafficking, including NGOs, and law enforcement and other governmental agencies. Some countries, including Estonia and the Netherlands, also indicated that they had developed awareness-raising campaigns targeted at tackling the demand for trafficking.

45. Many countries focused their awareness-raising campaigns on educating the general public about the dangers of human trafficking. Romania, for example, has developed a campaign targeting those who wish to seek work abroad, alerting them to the possibility of human trafficking in such a situation. Information on human trafficking was also reported to have been implemented in curricula for schoolchildren in Croatia and Estonia.

46. The media have been used by many countries as the primary conduit for awareness-raising campaigns. Television, radio and newspapers have all been used to disseminate information on human trafficking to national populations. Ukraine stated that 258 reports of human trafficking in the mass media had helped to raise public awareness of the forms and methods used by human traffickers. Telephone hotlines in Belarus, Estonia, Romania and Ukraine have been used to provide information and assistance to the general public in respect of human trafficking. Latvia has established an information website as another alternative for providing information on trafficking to the public.

47. Belarus reported various initiatives, including the regular broadcasting of public service announcements on television to raise public awareness of the dangers of human trafficking and the quarterly publication in the country's print media of updated information on businesses licensed to operate as marriage, modelling and job agencies. Such information was also available on a governmental website, which also provided an online link for those who were, or were at risk of becoming, victims of trafficking in persons.

48. Bulgaria reported that while the multi-actor national campaign against trafficking of women, launched in 2002, had made a major impact on public awareness, it had also led to a multidisciplinary approach in tackling human trafficking in Bulgaria.

49. El Salvador reported five current projects to raise awareness regarding human trafficking. The projects were directed at different audiences, including the general public, children and adolescents in schools and law enforcement, and were carried out through various media outlets.

50. Croatia reported that, alongside governmental media campaigns against trafficking in persons and trafficking in children, numerous awareness-raising campaigns by NGOs and international organizations were also conducted. It was suggested that, as a priority, special attention should be accorded in preschools, primary schools and secondary schools to preventive education on trafficking in persons.

51. Estonia reported measures to inform the public, governmental agencies and NGOs of the problems related to human trafficking, including the organization of 10 lectures per year, a media campaign targeting demand for human trafficking, the operation of an information hotline targeting human trafficking, educational programmes in schools, training law enforcement officials to recognize and respond to human trafficking and training for social workers and others who may be involved in cases of child trafficking.

52. Specific public awareness-raising initiatives in Japan included the production of videos and DVDs for public broadcast and dissemination and the distribution of 25,500 posters in 2007, in Japanese and nine other languages, to assist potential victims in requesting help from immigration offices and police.

53. In Latvia, an information website has been established, in three languages, presenting information on human trafficking, with a focus on how to find practical assistance.

54. Mauritius reported the important ongoing role of a public spokesperson, the Ombudsperson for Children, in advocating for children's rights and raising awareness of child trafficking.

55. Myanmar reported that its Central Supervision Committee on Illegal Migration had been able to educate 980,700 persons on the dangers of human trafficking since it was established in September 2001.

56. The Netherlands highlighted awareness-raising measures to tackle the demand side of human trafficking, targeting those who may wish to buy the services of trafficked women in the sex industry. A covenant between the Ministry of Justice and the Dutch newspaper companies relating to strict standards for erotic advertisements has been in force since 2005, with the possibility that the initiative will be expanded to regional media and the Internet. Additionally, a media campaign targeted at potential customers of prostitutes was launched in 2006 to increase customer awareness of human trafficking. It is hoped that the campaign will yield an increase in the number of reports relating to possible cases of human trafficking made to Crime Stoppers Netherlands, a system that allows information to be provided anonymously by members of the public to the authorities through a national telephone hotline.

57. The Philippines reported an advocacy campaign, run through NGOs, to focus national attention on human trafficking and mobilize support from the public and key institutions at both the national and the local level.

58. In Qatar, awareness campaigns target workers and domestic servants with leaflets and brochures translated into multiple languages, informing them of their rights and raising their awareness of exploitation. They are distributed at places such as the international airport, shopping centres, hospitals and employment offices. Prevention messages have also been disseminated through lectures in schools and seminars at prayer times.

59. Romania reported that awareness-raising campaigns for various targeted audiences included the continual operation of a human trafficking hotline and media advertisement. One message of the campaign targets youths and adults in search of jobs abroad, alerting them to the dangers of trafficking.

E. Assistance to and protection of victims

60. A recurring theme in the responses received was the importance of providing full protection to victims and of avoiding double victimization in investigations and criminal proceedings. Minimizing the exposure of a victim to potentially harmful encounters and providing opportunities for well-coordinated support (“one-stop” services) were strategies pursued by several respondents. Several Member States indicated that their legislation included a witness protection law and/or a law on the protection of victims of trafficking.¹⁰ Such laws provided for such things as the protection of anonymity for victims and witnesses, the possibility of video-link interviews or similar protective measures in criminal proceedings, cost-free legal counselling for victims and safe accommodation for witnesses and victims. Liechtenstein reported the possibility of informing victims of a suspect’s release from pretrial detention. Estonia and the Philippines reported involving experts in mapping the needs of trafficking victims and elaborating a service package for individuals, noting the corresponding need for services to be readily available. Oman reported the development of draft laws for the protection, support and reintegration back into society of trafficked victims in conjunction with draft laws criminalizing human trafficking.

61. A number of Member States highlighted the importance of offering a broad range of assistance to victims of trafficking, such as safe accommodation in shelters and reception centres or medical and psychological assistance, noting that such assistance should reflect the specific needs and traumas of victims, be they children, victims of sexual exploitation or others. Many Member States mentioned that victim assistance related to health, psychological support and counselling was provided by networks of NGOs. Belarus, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, El Salvador, Estonia, Japan, Mauritius, Myanmar, the Netherlands, the Niger, the Philippines, Poland, Qatar and Romania mentioned special refuges, reception centres, shelters or consultation centres as components of the help offered to victims of trafficking.¹¹

62. The Philippines reported the development and implementation of vocational training models to further the education and employment opportunities of victims and thus to facilitate their reintegration into communities. Other types of assistance,

¹⁰ Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, Latvia, Liechtenstein and Poland.

¹¹ Of note, El Salvador reported the adoption of a protocol regarding shelter assistance for victims of human trafficking in El Salvador, which was guided by gender concerns and looked to ensure the rights of children and adolescents.

ranging from legal aid to psychological support, were reported to have been given to victims of trafficking in Belarus, Croatia, El Salvador, Estonia, Hungary, Japan, Latvia, the Netherlands, the Philippines, Romania and Ukraine.

63. Measures taken to protect victims included the provision of temporary or permanent visas and residence permits. While in most of the respondent States the issuance of a temporary visa was linked to the victim's willingness to cooperate in legal proceedings, some States issued visas irrespective of the choice of the victim. Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, Latvia and Poland indicated that victims of trafficking could qualify for temporary visas. In Latvia, a temporary residence permit could be issued to a victim of human trafficking for at least six months if the victim cooperated with the competent authorities. Romania reported that foreign nationals who were victims of trafficking in persons were entitled to a recovery and reflection period of up to 90 days, and that they must be informed, in a language they can understand, of the legal and administrative procedures relevant to them.

64. Several respondents stressed the importance of providing support to victims of trafficking both in repatriation and reintegration upon their return to their country of origin or residence. This was particularly important to avoid revictimization. Belarus, Croatia, El Salvador, Estonia, Japan, Latvia, Myanmar, the Niger, the Philippines and Romania mentioned repatriation and rehabilitation assistance to victims of trafficking. Estonia had elaborated guidelines for its consulates and embassies in assisting Estonian victims abroad and helping them to return to Estonia, including, where necessary, through the provision of transport and accommodation. Hungary's victim protection programme includes the possibility of changing the witness's identity and relocation either within the country or – upon mutual agreement – to another country. El Salvador reported the development of a procedural manual for the repatriation of children and adolescent victims of human trafficking, underscored by a human rights-based approach and addressing gender discrimination issues. The Niger reported the establishment of reception and transit centres for child victims of trafficking where identified child victims were taken in until their places of origin were determined, upon which repatriation or other arrangements would be made for their return home. The Czech Republic reported that victims assisted through the national programme for support and protection of victims of trafficking in persons had been trafficked for both sexual exploitation and forced labour, noting that forced-labour victims were mostly men.

F. National coordination mechanisms

65. Mechanisms were reported to be in place in a number of countries in their efforts to coordinate national responses to human trafficking. Some of the countries that responded had established coordination mechanisms under national action plans in which the roles of the various actors (both governmental and non-governmental) responsible for tackling and preventing human trafficking were defined. Other countries had developed national mechanisms to achieve coordination between various parties responding to human trafficking at the national level.

66. Many of the countries that responded, including Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, El Salvador, Estonia and Liechtenstein, had established specific national coordination mechanisms for their countries, addressing the roles and relationships

between the different parties that are responsible for tackling and preventing human trafficking at the national level. Relationships between the various parties, including government ministries, law enforcement agencies and NGOs, were often defined within the mechanisms in order to establish the most effective coordination to tackle and prevent human trafficking. The Czech Republic, for example, reported that it had established a national rapporteur to coordinate prevention activities in that country.

67. Greece reported that it had implemented two inter-agency coordination mechanisms to tackle and prevent human trafficking. One had been established to coordinate responses among law enforcement agencies; it was administered through the Ministry of Justice. The other had been established for coordination among Government ministries through the Actions against Trafficking in Human Beings Programme. Poland had established two teams, a team for trafficking in human beings and a central team for the combating of trafficking in human beings, human organs and child pornography and paedophilia, coordinated by the Department of Migration Policy and the General Headquarters of the Police, respectively. Both teams focused on the coordination of efforts to prevent human trafficking.

68. National action plans were reported to have been established in Japan and Latvia, as their preferred approach to national coordination was to tackle and prevent human trafficking in a comprehensive manner. Mauritius and the Niger had developed national action plans on the protection of children against sexual abuse, which encompassed responding to child trafficking.

69. In Belarus, an ongoing State programme to combat crime called for further implementation, the updating of integrated measures and new draft laws to reinforce efforts to combat trafficking.

70. Bulgaria reported on the existence of the National Commission for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings at the ministerial level. Its tasks, among others, were to organize and coordinate the work of all relevant institutions dealing with human trafficking and to develop an annual programme of work against trafficking in human beings. Bulgaria also noted that joint public awareness-raising work by major governmental and non-governmental actors had helped develop a multilevel, multidisciplinary and multi-agency approach in tackling trafficking in persons.

71. Croatia reported that an infrastructure consisting of a national committee and coordinator in the context of a four-year national programme was supported by the holding of regular sessions to coordinate counter-trafficking activities, as well as meetings between the representatives of individual agencies for specific initiatives.

72. The Czech Republic reported that, in addition to its having a national rapporteur, an interdisciplinary working group met twice a year to allow representatives of State bodies, the police, NGOs and justice to discuss current issues.

73. El Salvador indicated that coordination, cooperation and support mechanisms were in place among governmental institutions, local authorities, NGOs and international organizations. El Salvador reported previously on the existence of the National Committee against Human Trafficking.

74. Greece reported the development of focused inter-agency initiatives. A special committee had been established for the coordination of actions of law enforcement

agencies concerning trafficking in human beings. A separate programme addressed the coordination of the competent ministries in tackling human trafficking and covered all courses of action in response to trafficking, with a focus on national monitoring of the safety and well-being of trafficked victims who are identified in Greece.

75. Hungary reported that an intersectoral working group had developed a framework agreement for the related ministries and non-governmental and international organizations establishing a victim referral mechanism.

76. Japan reported that its national action plan comprehensively addressed preventive measures, law enforcement and support for victims of human trafficking. While Government officials have been more actively exchanging information and cooperating with NGOs on trafficking issues, Japan hosts an annual contact-point meeting at which all parties concerned, including representatives of various foreign embassies and NGOs, meet to exchange information and views on human trafficking cases.

77. Latvia reported that regular meetings of a national working group were intended to discuss the progress in the implementation of the national action plan and to gain understanding of the latest trafficking trends.

78. Liechtenstein reported on meetings held in December 2006 that were aimed at developing a common understanding of trafficking in persons, identifying responsibilities of the different authorities and elaborating a cooperation model on the handling of cases of human trafficking.

79. The Niger noted the establishment of two national commissions to combat trafficking in persons, one of which dealt exclusively with trafficking in children. Both commissions had members representing the various ministries concerned, civil society, religious associations and the Association of Traditional Chiefs of the Niger. It was noted, however, that in order to improve performance in these areas, it would be necessary to strengthen the mobilization of supporting funds.

80. Ukraine has approved its third State Programme to Counter Trafficking in Persons, outlining the work to be done by law enforcement authorities and Government departments to counter trafficking up to 2010.

G. International cooperation

81. The responses received clearly reflect the considerable efforts made by Governments to increase international cooperation against trafficking in persons. These included measures to establish and further improve cooperation mechanisms and working relationships at the bilateral, regional and international levels in line with international treaty obligations and practical realities. International and regional organizations were identified as playing an important role in further advancing those processes.

82. Many States reported that they had taken a series of initiatives to increase cooperation with their neighbouring countries, as well as with the main countries of origin, transit or destination connected to their territories by trafficking routes, addressing the whole range of issues involved, including prevention, police and

legal cooperation, victim support and reintegration. This was often done within the framework of international instruments, through regional instruments, bilateral agreements and memorandums of understanding and in the context of activities of international and regional organizations. For example, the Arab League held a workshop in October 2007 on the development of a mechanism to address the issue of trafficking in persons in Arab legislation. Sixteen Arab countries were represented at the workshop, which focused on legislative developments and the importance of Arab law in fighting trafficking in persons in line with the Protocol.

83. Some States noted that international cooperation also included the exchange of ideas and experiences among practitioners of different countries and accordingly referred to the convening of expert meetings on different aspects of trafficking in persons at the bilateral and multilateral levels.

III. Technical assistance of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

84. Further to operative paragraph 15 of Economic and Social Council resolution 2006/27, requesting the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime to continue to promote the ratification of, and to assist, upon request, Member States in the implementation of, the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, within available extrabudgetary resources, not excluding the use of existing resources from the regular budget of the Office, the secretariat has prepared an accompanying report for the seventeenth session of the Commission in which it provides a detailed account of its relevant work through 2007 (E/CN.15/2008/4).

Inter-Agency Cooperation Group against Trafficking in Persons

85. With regard to operative paragraph 16 of resolution 2006/27, requesting the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime to organize a meeting on technical assistance for Member States in order to coordinate the work of agencies and bodies of the United Nations system, as well as other relevant intergovernmental organizations, the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in cooperation with the Office, hosted the first inter-agency coordination meeting among international organizations on collaborative interventions to counter trafficking in persons, in Tokyo in September 2006.

86. As a result of that initiative, the Inter-Agency Cooperation Group against Trafficking in Persons (ICAT) has been established, with the aim of fostering coordination and cooperation among relevant United Nations agencies and other relevant international organizations to assist States in preventing and combating human trafficking. It is designed to promote effective and efficient use of existing resources, utilizing, to the extent possible, mechanisms already in place at the regional and national levels, and to share information, experiences and good practices on anti-trafficking activities of the partner agencies with Governments, international and regional organizations, NGOs and other relevant bodies. Two ICAT meetings were held in 2007. Organizations that have participated in the three meetings of ICAT to date are the International Labour Organization, the International Organization for Migration, the United Nations Children's Fund, the

United Nations Development Fund for Women, the Division for the Advancement of Women of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations Population Fund, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the United Nations Fund for International Partnerships, the Office of the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, the International Criminal Police Organization, the World Bank, the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. Belarus has made a financial contribution to support the immediate work of ICAT.

IV. Conclusions

87. National coordination mechanisms and national plans are valuable in developing a multi-agency response to prevent and counter human trafficking.

88. Well-planned, comprehensive and effectively delivered awareness-raising and information campaigns are important components of national strategies to prevent human trafficking.

89. Within the context of national strategies, the training of professionals such as law enforcement officers, border control officials, criminal justice workers, social workers and health workers is a key element. Member States are encouraged to consider the provision of appropriate training programmes. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime advanced training manuals designed for law enforcement and criminal justice officials will be made available in late 2008, and Member States may wish to consider distributing that material to appropriate agencies.

90. The convening of joint training courses involving police officers, border police officers, social workers, members of NGOs, teachers, community workers and other members of civil society is valuable in promoting greater understanding and cooperation, and should be considered.

91. The introduction of a broad range of measures to ensure the protection of victims of trafficking should be considered by Member States. This should include appropriate steps to protect witnesses so as to assist in the investigation and prosecution of perpetrators.

92. Continued efforts are required to promote effective cooperation between law enforcement agencies and legal authorities at the bilateral, regional and international levels.

93. In the light of the lack of information available with respect to trafficking in persons in post-conflict situations and regions of natural disaster, Member States may wish to consider this issue further.