Seventy-eighth session
Item 110 of the preliminary list
Crime prevention and criminal justice

Improving the coordination of efforts against trafficking in persons

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report has been prepared pursuant to General Assembly resolution 76/186, entitled “Improving the coordination of efforts against trafficking in persons”, and contains a summary of the efforts made by Member States and entities of the United Nations system, as well as by other organizations, towards its implementation. The report includes information on the status of adherence to the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, as well as on efforts made by all stakeholders to enhance the implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 64/293. The report also provides an update on the status and work of the United Nations voluntary trust fund for victims of trafficking in persons, especially women and children; a summary of the findings of the Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2022, published by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime; and an update on the work of the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons, and covers the period from December 2021 to May 2023.

* A/78/50.
I. Introduction

1. The General Assembly, on 16 December 2021, adopted resolution 76/186, entitled “Improving the coordination of efforts against trafficking in persons”, in which it reiterated its strong condemnation of trafficking in persons, especially women and children, as a serious threat to human dignity and physical integrity, human rights and sustainable development.

2. In its resolution, the General Assembly also noted that reports had highlighted that a sharp increase in unemployment rates brought about by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic was likely to worsen the circumstances of those most at risk of falling victim to trafficking in persons, and reaffirmed its strong support for the central role of the United Nations system in the global response to the COVID-19 pandemic, including in addressing the issue of trafficking in persons in the context of the pandemic.

3. Furthermore, in its resolution, the General Assembly urged Member States and other stakeholders mentioned in the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, adopted in its resolution 64/293, to continue to contribute to the full and effective implementation of the Global Plan of Action, including by means of strengthening cooperation and improving coordination among themselves. The Global Plan of Action seeks to promote universal ratification of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. It also seeks to help States to reinforce their political commitments and legal obligations to prevent and combat trafficking in persons; promote comprehensive, coordinated and consistent responses at the national, regional and international levels to counter trafficking in persons; promote a human rights-based and gender- and age-sensitive approach in addressing all factors that make people vulnerable to trafficking in persons and strengthen the criminal justice response, which are necessary to prevent trafficking in persons, protect its victims and prosecute its perpetrators; raise awareness within the United Nations system and also among States and other stakeholders, such as the private sector, civil society and the international and national mass media, and the public at large; and foster cooperation and coordination among all relevant stakeholders, including Member States, international organizations, civil society organizations and the private sector, and within various entities of the United Nations system, taking into account existing best practices and lessons learned. Under the Global Plan of Action, the General Assembly established the United Nations voluntary trust fund for victims of trafficking in persons, especially women and children, and strengthened the role of the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons.

4. The General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit a report on the implementation of resolution 76/186 at its seventy-eighth session. The present report is based, inter alia, on information received from Member States and relevant stakeholders, including the member entities of the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons, provided in response to a note verbale requesting relevant input. The report covers the reporting period since the adoption of resolution 76/186, from 16 December 2021 to 31 May 2023.


5. In its resolution 76/186, the General Assembly urged Member States that had not yet done so to consider ratifying or acceding to, as a matter of priority, the Organized Crime Convention and its supplementary Trafficking in Persons Protocol.
During the reporting period, three States acceded to the Protocol: Andorra (21 September 2022), Bhutan (20 February 2023) and Pakistan (4 November 2022), bringing the total number of States that have acceded to the Protocol to 181 and drawing increasingly closer to universal ratification.

III. Trends and flows in trafficking in persons

6. In its resolution 76/186, the General Assembly called upon Member States to continue their efforts to criminalize trafficking in persons in all its forms, and to investigate, prosecute and penalize traffickers and intermediaries.

7. In its resolution 64/293, in which the General Assembly adopted the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to strengthen the capacity of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) to report biennially on patterns and flows of trafficking in persons at the national, regional and international levels. In 2023, UNODC published the seventh edition of its flagship report, the *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2022*, which presents and analyses data from 141 countries on trafficking cases detected between 2018 and 2021. Summaries of 800 court cases adjudicated between 2012 and 2020 and the overall data set on trafficking in persons for the period 2003–2021, covering more than 450,000 victims and 300,000 suspected offenders, were used to support the findings set out in the report. The *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2022* presents 11 major findings, including the finding that the number of detected victims of trafficking had fallen for the first time in 20 years, as the COVID-19 pandemic both limited opportunities for exploitation and potentially pushed trafficking further underground, while constraining law enforcement capacities to target the crime. Another key finding was a global reduction of 27 per cent in convictions for trafficking in persons in 2020 compared with 2019, continuing a downward trend that began in 2017, with the highest reduction of 56 per cent being recorded in South Asia. In addition, the report noted that most victims rescue themselves, reaching out to the authorities on their own initiative, instead of being proactively identified by the relevant authorities. This is a matter of great concern, as trafficking victims face great obstacles in removing themselves from exploitative situations and may not necessarily identify themselves as victims of crime. The report further identifies war, conflict and climate change among the factors that compound the risk of trafficking in persons, and notes that trafficked women and children suffer more severe forms of violence at the hands of traffickers.

IV. Synthesis of efforts against trafficking in persons

A. Efforts by Member States

8. As at 31 May 2023, the following 49 Member States had submitted information on their efforts against trafficking in persons in response to a request from UNODC: Algeria, Australia, Austria, Belarus, Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Honduras, Hungary, Italy, Jordan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lebanon, Lithuania, Madagascar, Mexico, Morocco, Namibia, Netherlands (Kingdom of the), Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sudan, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Ukraine and Zimbabwe.

9. Most States reported that they had developed and were implementing national strategic frameworks and action plans to counter trafficking in persons, and had inter-ministerial committees or task forces in place to coordinate implementation at the national level. Certain States reported having started the process of drafting new

1 Available at [https://treaties.un.org/](https://treaties.un.org/).
or new iterations of national plans. Several States with national plans in place reported
having clustered their responses according to the four thematic areas outlined in the
Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, namely, prevention of
trafficking in persons, protection of and assistance to victims and witnesses,
prosecution of trafficking in persons, and strengthening of partnerships against
trafficking in persons.

1. Prevention

10. In its resolution 76/186 the General Assembly invited Member States to address
the social, economic, cultural, political and other factors that make people vulnerable
to trafficking in persons, such as poverty, unemployment, inequality and humanitarian
emergencies. In addition, it called upon Member States, international organizations,
civil society organizations and the private sector, through partnerships, as appropriate,
to increase and support prevention efforts in countries of origin, transit and
destination by focusing domestically and globally on the demand and supply chains
that foster all forms of trafficking and the goods and services produced as a result of
trafficking in persons. Noting the centrality of sustainable development to addressing
the underlying drivers of trafficking in persons, the General Assembly recalled the
targets of the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular those targets that
specifically address trafficking in persons. They include target 5.2, on eliminating all
forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres,
including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation; target 8.7, on taking
immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and
human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of
child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child
labour in all its forms; and target 16.2, on ending abuse, exploitation, trafficking and
all forms of violence against and torture of children.

11. Most States reported that they had undertaken preventive measures, including
awareness-raising and the training of law enforcement agencies and other relevant
stakeholders, as well as steps to address the root causes of trafficking in persons,
including through poverty eradication programmes. Prevention efforts targeted
people in vulnerable situations, such as migrants, refugees, children, adolescents and
Indigenous communities.

12. Several countries reported having used the World Day against Trafficking in
Persons (30 July), established by the General Assembly in its resolution 68/192, to
raise awareness of trafficking in persons, with the World Day theme in 2022, “Use
and abuse of technology”, recognizing that although technology was being abused by
traffickers to recruit and exploit victims, it could also effectively counter trafficking
in persons. Several countries had joined the Blue Heart Campaign against Human
Trafficking, disseminating information and involving both national and international
stakeholders. One State reported having launched an anti-trafficking alert sign for
facilitating immediate identification of possible trafficking cases, and, in another
State, towns and municipalities had illuminated their town halls or other important
buildings in blue, the official Blue Heart Campaign colour.

13. Several States reported commemorating the International Day against Sexual
Exploitation and Trafficking of Women and Children (23 September) and the
European Union Anti-Trafficking Day (18 October), and holding national week-long
campaigns, leveraging social media in their awareness-raising efforts.

14. Several countries undertook efforts to empower women, promote gender
equality and support related education programmes, noting the relevance of those
efforts to crime prevention. Others financially supported global efforts to address
systemic drivers of trafficking in persons, including measures relating to gender
equality, humanitarian assistance, education and health. Support was also provided to
survivors of trafficking, in particular regarding access to the labour market, in order
to prevent the risk of survivors being trafficked again.
15. Although in most cases, awareness-raising efforts were coordinated by national counter-trafficking bodies such as anti-trafficking secretariats, other stakeholders, including civil society organizations, aviation, transport and other companies, and international organizations, were also involved. In one case, a trilateral joint statement endorsed by the trade and labour ministers of Japan, the United States of America and the European Union\(^2\) was used to raise awareness of forced labour, which is one of the forms of exploitation listed in the Trafficking in Persons Protocol.

16. The use of technology in prevention was also reported, including for disseminating information widely and monitoring online platforms regularly for suspicious content and possible indicators of trafficking. Countries supported innovative projects targeting cyber-enabled trafficking, and enabled relevant personnel to attend regional seminars on cybercrime and e-evidence.

17. States reported making efforts to ensure they did not procure goods and services that were products of exploitation. Some countries reported that they had national legislative and policy frameworks for preventing trafficking in persons in supply chains, and regularly engaged with businesses to ensure responsible business conduct in line with established principles and standards. Some countries contributed to similar regional developments, with several European countries referring to support for the European Union proposals to ensure companies undertook due diligence to prevent the procurement of products produced by people in situations of trafficking, as well as instituting bans to prevent products made using forced labour being sold on the European Union market. One country also reported utilizing trade agreements with other countries to ensure the inclusion of obligations to address child and forced labour, while at the same time providing technical assistance to partner countries to ensure full compliance with the obligations. Small and medium-sized enterprises were also trained on corporate social responsibility to enable self-assessment of compliance with human rights, good governance and fair-trade practices.

18. Refugees fleeing armed conflicts were noted as being vulnerable to exploitation by criminals, including traffickers. To counter the increased risk of trafficking that targeted refugees, States engaged in awareness-raising efforts, including distributing information on the dangers of trafficking in persons that targeted displaced persons and establishing dedicated units to coordinate efforts to support refugees. International cooperation was also cited as an effective means of facilitating swift information exchange among law enforcement agencies to address trafficking risks. In some countries, efforts were made to enrol refugee children in school to facilitate their integration and reduce the risk of them being trafficked.

19. With regard to addressing trafficking in persons in the context of migration, countries noted efforts to raise awareness among migrant workers of their rights. One country reported having distributed booklets on labour rights to embassies and consulates of countries from which most of its migrant workers came.

20. Social inclusion is also a critical element for reducing vulnerability to and preventing trafficking in persons. Several countries in Europe reported having targeted disadvantaged Roma communities and developing national social inclusion strategies that promoted efforts to include Roma people, with one country reporting having produced a textbook on detecting early and forced marriages in the Roma community.

2. **Protection of and assistance to victims**

21. In its resolution 76/186, the General Assembly called upon Member States to provide victim-centred protection and assistance to victims of trafficking with full respect for their human rights, and to provide appropriate victim-centred care and assistance and services for the rehabilitation of victims, including support for family

\(^2\) European Commission, “Trilateral joint statement from the trade and labour ministers of the US, Japan and the EU on the International Labour Organization’s global forced labour estimates”, 15 September 2022.
reunification, where safe and appropriate, especially children, taking into consideration the best interests of the child.

22. States reported that they had made efforts to protect victims of trafficking, including through specific legislative frameworks and policies, designated funding institutions, the provision of support to shelters, and the provision of victim-centred, survivor-informed and gender-responsive support.

23. Furthermore, States reported having entities specifically mandated to provide necessary victim assistance, following established referral procedures, including specific procedures for referring victims of child trafficking. One State reported having drafted a new law that would provide for the establishment of a formal national mechanism to assist and protect trafficking victims.

24. Most States reported providing assistance to victims, including legal support, accommodation, medical or health care, psychological support, access to the labour market, formalization of their legal stay and integration support. States made provisions for victims to be interviewed by trained personnel, in the presence of psychologists or similar experts, to prevent revictimization.

25. With regard to accommodation, States reported efforts to maintain the family unit, with child victims accommodated together with their family members during the process of assessing their needs and securing the required support. One State had developed guidelines for various stakeholders regarding appropriate conduct when working with child victims of trafficking. Some States reported having applied the Barnahus model of child protection and assistance, which promotes the provision of, inter alia, law enforcement, criminal justice, child protection, and medical and health-care services, under one roof, in a child-friendly environment.

26. The submissions from States showed that the implementation of the non-punishment principle, which stipulates that victims of trafficking should not be punished for offences committed as a direct consequence of being trafficked, continues to be uneven. Some States reported having regularly implemented the principle, including by having specific provisions in their laws and establishing working groups to enhance its implementation, but noted that its practical application remained challenging. Policies, procedures, practices and training were also reviewed to ensure appropriate coverage of the principle. The principle was largely addressed by States in the context of non-prosecution, despite non-punishment being a broad principle that encompasses forms of punishment other than criminalization. One country reported having conducted a review of its efforts to implement the principle during the reporting period. Another State noted that several factors should be considered when deciding whether to press charges or pursue prosecution, including whether the trafficking victim had been compelled to commit the offence, the severity of the offence that the trafficking victim had committed, and whether the safety of other vulnerable persons would be jeopardized in the absence of a criminal justice response, while also giving due consideration to the importance of ensuring that the trafficking victim had the opportunity to recover from the trauma associated with being trafficked.

3. Prosecution of trafficking in persons

27. In its resolution 76/186, the General Assembly called on Member States to continue their efforts to criminalize trafficking in persons in all its forms and to investigate, prosecute and penalize traffickers and intermediaries, and further encouraged Member States to take legislative or other measures to prevent, combat and eradicate trafficking in persons in the context of international migration by strengthening capacities and international cooperation to investigate, prosecute and

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3 For more details on the model, see www.barnahus.eu/en/about-barnahus/.
4 In 2022, the Working Group on Trafficking in Persons deliberated on the implementation of the principle (CTOC/COP/WG.4/2022/2).
penalize trafficking in persons, discouraging demand that fosters exploitation leading to trafficking, and ending impunity of trafficking networks.

28. Most States reported that they had legislation in place to criminalize trafficking in persons and guide national responses, while other States reported that they were in the process of drafting new legislation to that end. One State reported that it was developing legislation on the smuggling of migrants to complement its counter-trafficking efforts, taking into consideration the intersection between the issues.

29. Cooperation among countries was noted as crucial, in particular in relation to investigations. Some States reported the implementation of regional initiatives to enhance law enforcement cooperation and training, including the establishment of joint investigation teams and the organization of joint action days, for example as part of the European Multidisciplinary Platform against Criminal Threats, and operations to detect and dismantle trafficking networks and investigate cases of trafficking in persons. With regard to joint operations, some States reported participating in efforts coordinated by the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL), such as Operation Weka II, in which 44 States took part and during which more than 700 victims of trafficking were rescued and 300 arrests were made, including the arrest of 88 suspected traffickers.5

4. Partnerships

30. In its resolution 76/186, the General Assembly called upon Member States, international organizations, civil society organizations and the private sector, through partnerships, as appropriate, to increase and support prevention efforts in countries of origin, transit and destination, and also encouraged States to strengthen international cooperation and cooperation with the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons.

31. Several States reported taking a whole-of-government approach, ensuring coordination between all government departments and government efforts. States also reported having established national coordination mechanisms involving multiple stakeholders, including government departments, non-governmental organizations and in a few cases, private sector stakeholders.

32. Bilateral cooperation through memorandums of understanding was noted as having contributed to effective responses. Reference was also made to multi-country working groups or similar mechanisms, such as that established by the Nordic Council of Ministers, bringing together anti-trafficking coordinators from all Nordic countries, and the cooperation achieved under the framework of the Alliance for Protection (Child Protection Compact Partnerships) involving countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean.

33. In addition, States reported having made use of police cooperation structures, such as INTERPOL, the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (Europol), the Gulf Cooperation Council Police Organization and the Lancang-Mekong River Integrated Law Enforcement and Security Cooperation Centre. Reference was also made to cooperation within the Africa-Frontex Intelligence Community, which involves the central operations service of Frontex, Europol and 12 African States,6 and aims to collect strategic data on migration flows and transnational crime to detect changes concerning the main nationalities of migrants and victims of trafficking, the modus operandi of criminal groups and changes in irregular migration routes. Furthermore, the placement of police liaison officers in other countries was noted as helping to facilitate swift information-sharing related to cases of trafficking and efficient responses. Information was also shared through secure channels, such as the

5 For more on Operation Weka II, including a list of participating countries, see INTERPOL, “Operation Weka II: nearly 700 human trafficking victims rescued”, 27 June 2022.

6 Côte d’Ivoire, Eritrea, the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Libya, Mali, Morocco, the Niger, Nigeria, Senegal and the Sudan.
INTERPOL 1-24/7 global police secure communications system and the Secure Information Exchange Network Application of Europol.

34. States also strengthened partnerships with United Nations agencies and other international organizations, including UNODC, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Population Fund and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), to ensure comprehensive responses to trafficking in persons, including the facilitation of family reunifications. Some States mentioned partnerships with the private sector, in particular in relation to awareness-raising initiatives and with companies in the transport sector and the hospitality industry.

35. One State that reported that it was developing legislation on trafficking in persons expected the new law to have several positive results, including the promotion of international cooperation in the fight against trafficking, in compliance with international, regional and bilateral conventions to which it was a party.

B. Efforts by the United Nations agencies and other international organizations

36. In addition to the information submitted by Member States for the present report, input was also provided by several United Nations entities, namely, UNODC, the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), the International Labour Organization (ILO), IOM, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide, UN-Women, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), UNICEF, the United Nations University (UNU), the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict. Submissions were also received from the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children and the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and consequences.

37. In addition, submissions were received from the Arab Maghreb Union, the Council of the Baltic Sea States, the Council of Europe, the European Commission, the Gulf Cooperation Council Police, the International Centre for Migration Policy Development, INTERPOL, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Organization of American States (OAS).

1. Efforts to support the implementation by States of the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons

38. The General Assembly, in its resolution 76/186, urged relevant international, regional and subregional organizations, within their respective mandates, to continue to contribute to the full and effective implementation of the Global Plan of Action. In response, organizations noted the support they had provided to States to respond effectively to trafficking in persons in line with the four thematic areas of the Global Plan of Action and with their respective mandates, and reported having provided States with a range of technical assistance activities contributing to the development and implementation of strategies governing the overall response to trafficking in persons.

39. To strengthen global efforts to implement the Global Plan of Action, several entities developed and rolled out resources\(^7\) that provided detailed technical and

\(^7\) The resources vary in content and geographical application. They were developed for a variety of stakeholders and geographical settings.
policy guidance to States on preventing and combating trafficking in persons. Those resources included the following:

(a) UNODC published the Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2022, which provided a snapshot of the trafficking patterns and flows detected during the COVID-19 pandemic. Other resources published by UNODC include:

(i) Compendium on Promising Practices on Public-Private Partnerships to Prevent and Counter Trafficking in Persons, which promoted coherent and coordinated strategies between public authorities and the private sector for cooperating in addressing trafficking in persons within the supply chain and in the financial and technology sectors;

(ii) “Toolkit on the investigation and prosecution of trafficking in persons for organ removal”, produced in collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO) and encouraging the proactive investigation of possible cases or red flags;

(iii) A policy brief entitled Climate, Crime and Exploitation: the Gendered Links between Climate-related Risk, Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants, exploring how climate change, climate-related events and crimes that affect the environment influence trafficking in persons, with special consideration of the gender dimension;

(iv) An issue paper entitled The Concept of “Harbouring” in the Trafficking in Persons Protocol to help States Parties better understand the definition of trafficking in persons and apply it;

(v) Together with the Ministry of Justice and Public Security and the Public Defender of the Union of Brazil, a study on victims of trafficking exploited in drug trafficking, which focused on legal protection for defendants identified as international drug trafficking “mules”, including the application of the principle of non-punishment of victims of trafficking who are forced to traffic drugs;

(b) OHCHR and ICAO jointly developed “Guidelines for training cabin crew on identifying and responding to trafficking in persons” to build the capacity of cabin crew to identify possible trafficking cases. Furthermore, the ICAO Assembly adopted resolution A41-16, entitled “Development and implementation of facilitation provisions – combating human trafficking”, and ICAO published the “Manual on a comprehensive strategy for combating human trafficking in the aviation sector”;

(c) UNHCR produced a resource mapping the protection services available to vulnerable people on the move, including victims of trafficking, along the Central and Western Mediterranean Sea and Atlantic routes;

(d) IOM and the World Bank collaborated to produce a research report entitled Economic Shocks and Human Trafficking Risks: Evidence from IOM’s Victims of Human Trafficking Database, which noted that economic shocks increase vulnerability to trafficking in persons;

(e) UN-Women compiled the report of the Secretary-General entitled “Trafficking in women and girls: crises as a risk multiplier” (A/77/272), submitted to the General Assembly, which highlighted the impact of crises, including the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change-induced crises and armed conflicts, on increasing vulnerabilities to trafficking;

(f) UNICEF produced a practical guide for front-line responders entitled “Identification of victims/persons ‘at-risk’ of trafficking in human beings”, as well as Legislating for the Digital Age: Global Guide on Improving Legislative Frameworks to Protect Children from Online Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, which noted the dual role of technology in trafficking in persons;

(g) The Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate continued to engage in dialogues with States on linkages between crimes under international law and sexual and gender-based violence committed by members of terrorist groups,
including in connection with trafficking in persons, and detecting linkages between trafficking in persons and terrorism financing;

(h) The Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children cooperated with several United Nations agencies and international organizations to produce a joint advocacy brief entitled “Protecting the rights of children on the move in times of crisis”. The brief advocates for the protection of all children on the move, including undocumented and unaccompanied migrant and refugee children, and emphasizes that child protection systems are instrumental in responding to needs of all children in vulnerable situations, including victims of trafficking in persons;

(i) UNU produced materials advocating for the inclusion of the financial sector in counter-trafficking work, including in supporting survivor inclusion;

(j) The Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, produced two reports, one entitled “Trafficking in persons in the agriculture sector: human rights due diligence and sustainable development”, submitted to the Human Rights Council (A/HRC/50/33), and the other addressing the gender dimensions of trafficking in persons in the context of climate change, displacement and disaster risk reduction, submitted to the General Assembly (A/77/170);

(k) The Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and consequences, produced a report on contemporary forms of slavery affecting persons belonging to ethnic, religious and linguistic minority communities (A/HRC/51/26), which was submitted to the Human Rights Council. The report noted the vulnerability of minority groups to various crimes, including trafficking in persons;

(l) The Council of the Baltic Sea States produced the Handbook for Embassies and Diplomatic Missions on how to Assist and Protect Victims of Human Trafficking, thereby providing a tool for the prevention and identification of trafficking in persons and suggesting ways of assisting those persons. In addition, the “Baltic Sea region round-up report on human trafficking 2022” presents national and regional anti-trafficking responses, and best practices in addressing trafficking in persons from the Council and its member States;

(m) The International Centre for Migration Policy Development published, inter alia, two sets of practical guidance, on the inclusion of survivors in policy development and operational responses to trafficking in persons and on improving the participation of civil society in referral mechanisms, as well as facilitating bilateral cooperation between countries to address trafficking in persons;

(n) The European Commission’s fourth report on the progress made in the fight against trafficking in human beings acknowledged the effective cooperation between the European Union and other international and regional organizations, including in the framework of the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons;

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8 The advocacy brief, developed in collaboration with UNHCR, UNICEF, UNODC, IOM, OHCHR and OSCE, is available at https://violenceagainstchildren.un.org/.


(o) OAS produced a “Reporting guide on red flags associated with money-laundering cases linked to trafficking in persons”, which listed 10 suspicious business operations that could indicate a link between trafficking in persons and money-laundering;

(p) The Council of Europe explored the role of technology in trafficking in persons and proposed recommendations in a publication entitled “Online and technology-facilitated trafficking in human beings: summary and recommendations”;

(q) INTERPOL collaborated with several regional and international organizations in coordinating operations in the Americas, Asia, Africa and Europe. A total of 118 countries participated in the operations, leading to the rescue of nearly 1,200 victims of trafficking in the reporting period;

(r) The Gulf Cooperation Council Police Organization commenced work on a Gulf bulletin to combat human trafficking crimes, which, once approved in 2023, will facilitate the exchange of information on crimes related to trafficking in persons in the member States of the Gulf Cooperation Council.

2. Support for prevention efforts

40. Efforts to support the prevention initiatives of States focused on, among other things, capacity-building and supporting the identification and assistance of victims of trafficking, with most support being provided within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and other concurrent global crises. The support provided to States’ efforts included the following:

(a) The United Nations system, through the Task Force for the Development of a Joint Approach to Combating Human Trafficking and Forced Labour in Supply Chains of the High-level Committee on Management and Procurement Network, which was led by ILO and OSCE, developed a policy framework to prevent trafficking in persons and forced labour in its supply chains. The policy framework was approved by the High-Level Committee on Management in October 2022 and efforts to apply it began in 2023, led by ILO and the United Nations Office for Project Services;

(b) In addition to adopting the European Union Common Anti-Trafficking Plan to address trafficking in human beings and support potential victims among those fleeing the war in Ukraine, the European Commission presented three proposals to enhance efforts against trafficking in persons:


(ii) A proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and the Council on prohibiting products made with forced labour on the Union Market;

(iii) A proposal for a directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on corporate sustainability due diligence and amending directive 2019/1937/EU on the protection of persons who report breaches of Union law. The directive is intended to foster long-term sustainable and responsible corporate behaviour and to anchor international human rights standards, including trafficking-in-persons considerations, in the operations of companies and in corporate governance.

41. Documented evidence from Libya showed that armed conflict increased the risk of conflict-related sexual violence, which exacerbated vulnerability to trafficking in persons, with not only women and girls affected, but also men and boys. In the 2022 report on conflict-related sexual violence (S/2022/272), reports of sexual violence perpetrated by traffickers were noted. Concerned by the increased risk of conflict-related sexual violence, including trafficking in persons, following the escalation of the conflict in Ukraine, the United Nations, represented by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, signed a framework of cooperation with the Government of Ukraine to prevent and respond to conflict-related
sexual violence. In particular, the agreement sought to put in place risk mitigation measures against conflict-related trafficking in persons.

3. **Raising awareness of trafficking in persons**

42. In its resolution 76/186, the General Assembly invited all stakeholders to continue to observe the World Day against Trafficking in Persons in order to raise awareness of trafficking in persons and the situation of the victims of the crime and for the promotion and protection of their rights.

43. Many organizations and relevant experts reported having used the World Day to raise awareness, including through releasing advocacy materials. The Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons released a joint statement in 2022 calling on States and relevant stakeholders to harness the opportunities presented by technology to counter trafficking in persons. The United Nations Network on Migration also released a statement, as did the Human Rights Council special procedures mandate-holders and other experts.

44. In addition, throughout the reporting period, organizations used their respective advocacy functions to raise awareness and advocate for the protection of vulnerable communities, including displaced people, the need to address the long-term concerns of those communities and the prevention of sectarian violence, given that trafficking in persons thrived in violent environments where abuse was prevalent. For example, UN-Women and ILO, through the Spotlight Initiative, raised awareness of increased risks of violence, including trafficking in persons, faced by migrant women workers, and UNHCR engaged with communities along key mixed movement routes in Africa, through its “Telling the Real Story” initiative, to raise awareness of trafficking risks and other abuse, and of how to access protection and support.

45. Since December 2022, the Deputy Secretary-General has led a United Nations system-wide mapping and practice exercise to identify areas of action in order to support global efforts to address trafficking in all its forms, including trafficking in persons. Recommendations from the process will shape the United Nations system-wide approach to trafficking in all its forms.

4. **Victim-centred care and assistance**

46. The “Regional guidelines for the social inclusion of victims of trafficking in persons in the Americas”, produced by OAS, are aimed at reinforcing institutional responses in order to protect and assist trafficking survivors. The second edition of the National Referral Mechanisms: Joining Efforts to Protect the Rights of Trafficked Persons – a Practical Handbook was published by the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights to inform the efforts of OSCE-participating States to establish a harmonized and comprehensive system for the identification, protection and social inclusion of and provision of individual support and access to services for victims of trafficking. Other relevant guidance on survivor inclusion was published by the International Centre for Migration Policy Development and UNU.

47. The Menthor programme, jointly implemented by UNODC and OAS, aims to improve the capacity of States and civil society organizations to respond to trafficking in persons, including by assisting and protecting victims of trafficking through a mentorship programme for prosecutors, law enforcement agents and government officials involved in victim identification and assistance.

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C. Inter-agency coordination mechanisms

1. Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons

48. The Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons is a policy forum that was formally established in 2007 pursuant to General Assembly resolution 61/180 in order to enhance cooperation and coordination and facilitate a holistic and comprehensive approach by the international community to trafficking in persons. The General Assembly further entrusted the Executive Director of UNODC with coordinating the activities of the Group.

49. In 2022, UNU became the newest member of the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons, following the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children and the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, which both joined in 2021, bringing the total number of members, as at May 2023, to 31. The co-chairs of the Group for 2023 are IOM and the Office of the Special Representative on Violence against Children, succeeding UNODC and the International Centre for Migration Policy Development.\(^\text{13}\)

50. During the reporting period, the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons continued to carry out work on the basis of its Plan of Action adopted in 2020. The Plan of Action clusters the Group’s work into six priority areas, namely, building the evidence base, addressing the core drivers of trafficking, ensuring a rights-based approach, implementing existing measures and holding traffickers accountable, discouraging demand, and strengthening cooperation and multi-stakeholder partnerships.

51. Noting the multiple crises currently facing the world and their impact on trafficking, the Principals of the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons, at their annual meeting in December 2022, focused on trafficking in persons in the context of humanitarian crises and conflict situations and issued a related call to action\(^\text{14}\) for States and relevant actors to strengthen efforts and cooperation in order to prevent and combat human trafficking in humanitarian crises and conflict situations. The next meeting of the Principals is scheduled to be held in the second half of 2023.

52. In line with the priority area of discouraging the demand for trafficking, the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons produced an issue brief entitled “Addressing vulnerability to trafficking in persons”,\(^\text{15}\) which was launched in May 2022 during the first International Migration Review Forum. The issue brief explores the concept of vulnerability and the various dimensions and factors that make a person vulnerable to trafficking in persons. It also provides recommendations to relevant stakeholders for addressing those factors and mitigating related risks.

53. The Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons also continued its advocacy work to focus States’ attention on trafficking in persons. In addition to its participation in the International Migration Review Forum in May 2022, the Group held outreach events, in hybrid format, during the sixty-seventh session of the Commission on the Status of Women (March 2022), the Vienna Migration Conference (October 2022) and the eleventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. Those events addressed diverse thematic issues, including preventing trafficking in persons.

\(^{13}\) For a detailed account of work implemented by the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons in 2022, see “Annual Report 2022: engagement cooperation outreach”.

\(^{14}\) Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons, “A world in crisis: global humanitarian crises and conflicts increase human trafficking concerns – call to action” (December 2022).

\(^{15}\) Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons, “Addressing vulnerability to trafficking in persons”, Issue Brief, No.12 (March 2022).
in procurement and supply chains, and were all attended by participants from a wide range of backgrounds and sectors.

54. The Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons also continued to engage with relevant multilateral processes by making joint submissions to the Progress Declaration of the International Migration Review Forum, and to the review of the directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims. The Group released a joint statement on the use and abuse of technology, which called upon States to harness the potential of technology to prevent and combat trafficking in persons.

55. In line with its priority to strengthen cooperation and multi-stakeholder partnerships, the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons reinforced existing cooperation with relevant inter-agency mechanisms, including the United Nations Network on Migration, Alliance 8.7, the OSCE-led Expert Coordination Team of the Alliance against Trafficking in Persons and the Task Team on Anti-Trafficking in Humanitarian Action of the Global Protection Cluster.

### 2. United Nations Network on Migration

56. The United Nations Network on Migration was established to ensure effective, timely and coordinated system-wide support for Member States in relation to the implementation, follow-up and review of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, which was adopted in 2018 through General Assembly resolution 73/195. It is coordinated by IOM and is led by a nine-member executive committee comprising the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, ILO, IOM, OHCHR, UNICEF, the United Nations Development Programme, UNHCR, UNODC and WHO.

57. The United Nations Network on Migration played a pivotal role in organizing the first quadrennial International Migration Review Forum in May 2022, at which participants, inter alia, discussed and shared progress made in the implementation of all aspects of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. The Global Compact has, among its 23 objectives, an objective (objective 10) that is specific to trafficking in persons, namely, to prevent, combat and eradicate trafficking in persons in the context of international migration. The General Assembly endorsed the Progress Declaration of the International Migration Review Forum (resolution 76/266), which addresses, inter alia, trafficking in persons.

58. In July 2022, the United Nations Network on Migration released a joint statement on the World Day against Trafficking in Persons, entitled “Reclaiming digital spaces to counter human trafficking and protect its victims”. The statement called upon States to expand efforts to prevent, combat and eradicate technology-facilitated trafficking in persons; incorporate a human rights-based, gender-responsive and child-sensitive perspective into strategies being developed to address the nexus between technology and trafficking in persons; and use technology and innovative tools to enhance international cooperation in addressing cases of trafficking in persons, in compliance with international law and ensuring the rights of victims, including access to justice and to full reparations.

59. One of the new workstreams of the United Nations Network on Migration for the period 2022–2024 aims to ensure migrant protection through strengthened responses to migrant smuggling and increased coordination on its linkages with trafficking in persons. The workstream is co-led by UNODC and IOM.

### 3. Alliance 8.7

60. Alliance 8.7 is a global partnership of States, United Nations agencies, intergovernmental bodies, regional organizations, employment organizations,
businesses and civil society organizations committed to achieving target 8.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals, which calls for States to take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms. In May 2022, Alliance 8.7 convened the fifth Global Conference on the Elimination of Child Labour. The Conference adopted the Durban Call to Action on the Elimination of Child Labour, which emphasized the need to accelerate progress on ending child labour and acknowledged the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and other global vulnerabilities on global efforts in that regard. ILO serves as the secretariat of Alliance 8.7.

4. **Task Team on Anti-Trafficking in Humanitarian Action of the Global Protection Cluster**

61. The Global Protection Cluster is a network composed of United Nations agencies, international organizations and non-governmental organizations that are involved in protection work in humanitarian crises. It draws its mandate from the Inter-Agency Standing Committee.

62. The Global Protection Cluster has, among its task forces, the Task Team on Anti-Trafficking in Humanitarian Action, which was established to inform the position of the Global Protection Cluster on anti-trafficking interventions in humanitarian responses in non-refugee settings and to provide recommendations on how best to integrate those interventions systematically in existing cluster mechanisms. The Task Team takes stock of existing anti-trafficking work carried out through various national protection clusters, gathers good practices and develops guidance on addressing trafficking in humanitarian responses in internal displacement settings. The Task Team is co-led by IOM and UNHCR.

D. **Multilateral engagement**

63. During the reporting period, the General Assembly concluded its third quadrennial appraisal of the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, following a multi-stakeholder consultative process involving Member States and other stakeholders such as civil society and international organizations. The resulting 2021 Political Declaration on the Implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons was adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 76/7 of 22 November 2021. The next appraisal is scheduled to be carried out in 2025.

64. At its thirty-first session, held in May 2022, the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice recommended to the Economic and Social Council the adoption of a draft resolution on strengthening national and international efforts, including with the private sector, to protect children from sexual exploitation and abuse. The draft resolution, in which the linkages between child sexual exploitation and trafficking in children for commercial sexual exploitation were noted, was subsequently adopted by the Council in July 2022 (resolution 2022/14).

65. In May 2022, the International Migration Review Forum was convened to review progress made in the implementation of all aspects of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, including commitments related to trafficking in persons under objective 10 of the Global Compact. As noted above, the resulting Progress Declaration was endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution 76/266.

66. In October 2022, the eleventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime adopted resolution 11/5, entitled “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”. The resolution, which is only the third resolution on trafficking in persons adopted by the Conference,
focuses on the prevention of trafficking. To support the work of the Conference, the Working Group on Trafficking in Persons met in June 2022 and focused on two trafficking-related topics, namely, appropriate criminal justice responses to victims who have been compelled to commit offences as a result of their being trafficked, and best practices in joint investigations and specialized prosecutions. The meeting of the Working Group was immediately followed by the first constructive dialogue on trafficking in persons, which was attended by relevant stakeholders, including non-governmental organizations, and allowed for, inter alia, the briefing of participants on the development of the Mechanism for the Review of the Implementation of the Organized Crime Convention\(^\text{17}\) and the collection of input on ways to improve the implementation of the Organized Crime Convention and the Trafficking in Persons Protocol.\(^\text{18}\)

V. Update on the United Nations voluntary trust fund for victims of trafficking in persons, especially women and children

67. The United Nations voluntary trust fund for victims of trafficking in persons, especially women and children, was established by the General Assembly in its resolution 64/293, on the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, with the aim of providing humanitarian, legal and financial aid to victims of trafficking through established channels of assistance, such as governmental, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations. The trust fund emphasizes a victim-centred approach aligned with the thematic areas of prevention, prosecution and protection outlined in the Global Plan of Action. It is managed by UNODC.

68. The mandate of the trust fund emphasizes direct victim assistance as an integral component of the global effort to address trafficking in persons. The trust fund supports the implementation and delivery of activities and services that enhance the psychological recovery and social reintegration of victims of trafficking and empower survivors to claim their rights. These efforts include support for the identification of victims, legal and administrative assistance, and coordination and information-sharing. Each year, more than 3,500 victims are directly assisted through the trust fund’s partners.

69. Since its inception, the trust fund has launched seven global calls for funding proposals. Under its sixth call for proposals, in the period 2021–2022, the trust fund awarded grants to 24 projects implemented by non-governmental organizations in 19 countries. In total, since 2011, more than 145 specialized projects undertaken by non-governmental organizations in more than 60 countries have been selected, with a total of over $6 million in grants awarded to provide direct assistance to victims. The trust fund received $1 million in voluntary contributions in 2022, which was slightly below the annual funding target of $1.5 million needed to ensure its sustainable and effective functioning. The priority of the seventh call for proposals, launched on 27 January 2023, was projects providing direct assistance and protection to victims of armed conflict, and to large movements of refugees or migrants or those fleeing instability caused by a breakdown of law and order. The call for proposals also prioritized projects that supported human trafficking victims identified in or fleeing areas that were affected by the spillover effects of climate change-induced displacement. It further prioritized projects targeting women and girls, as well as underserved groups and those left most behind, in particular excluded or disadvantaged victims of trafficking.

70. As at April 2023, the trust fund had received, since its inception, a total of $9.8 million in contributions from a wide range of supporters, including 35 Member States, 34 private sector organizations and several individual donors.

\(^{17}\) Further information on the Implementation Review Mechanism is available at [www.undoc.org/](http://www.undoc.org/).

\(^{18}\) In line with article 32, paragraph 3 (c), of the Organized Crime Convention.
The current Board of Trustees of the trust fund is composed of Alexis Bethancourt Yau (Chair), Julie Okah-Donli, Maria Susana Vasquez Ople, Viktoria Avakova and Inge Vervotte.

VI. Recommendations

72. It is recommended that Member States, and other relevant stakeholders, as appropriate, consider the following measures:

(a) Member States should strengthen cooperation among themselves by, inter alia, establishing memorandums of understanding and joint investigation teams and by appointing liaison personnel in source, transit and destination countries in order to facilitate the timely operational exchange of information and intelligence on trafficking in persons;

(b) Member States should cooperate with other relevant stakeholders, such as civil society organizations, international organizations and private sector companies, including financial institutions, to effectively implement the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons and ensure effective prevention of trafficking in persons;

(c) In fulfilment of the Global Plan of Action, Member States should base their human trafficking prevention efforts on sustainable development that leaves no one behind, in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which provides a comprehensive blueprint for an inclusive, prosperous future that addresses the underlying drivers and enablers of trafficking in persons, including poverty, unemployment, inequality and humanitarian emergencies;

(d) Member States should provide sufficient and appropriate assistance and protection to all victims without discrimination, regardless of their participation in the criminal justice process, including through identification of the international protection needs of survivors and persons at risk of trafficking who may be refugees to ensure that they have access to asylum procedures and sustainable solutions. Those solutions may include, where appropriate, third-country resettlement, which can reduce vulnerability to abuse and trafficking;

(e) Member States should adequately support entities and staff involved in counter-trafficking efforts, including through funding, to implement actions to prevent trafficking in persons and protect victims of that crime;

(f) Member States should ensure the comprehensive application of the non-punishment principle, recognizing that victims of trafficking may encounter forms of punishment other than criminalization;

(g) Member States should strengthen national legislation to address technology-facilitated human trafficking, including its evolving nature, and, as part of their due diligence obligation, design more robust regulatory frameworks with and for social media companies in order to increase the accountability of those companies in relation to cases of trafficking in persons involving their platforms;

(h) Member States and relevant actors should protect people, in particular children and adolescents, from technology-facilitated trafficking, recognizing the dual nature of technology as an enabler and disabler of trafficking, and guarantee the existence of robust regulations and mechanisms to ensure online safety for children;

(i) In view of the documented impact of humanitarian crises, including climate change-induced crises, on trafficking in persons, Member States should ensure that comprehensive prevention and protection measures are in place to mitigate risks of trafficking, in particular in situations of displacement;
(j) Member States should incorporate the perspectives of survivors of trafficking, including children, with appropriate safeguards, in the development of counter-trafficking interventions;

(k) Member States should establish linkages between trafficking in persons and other organized criminal activities, and ensure the implementation of a comprehensive response to trafficking in persons;

(l) The Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons should aim to include regional and international organizations from all regions in its efforts.