

**UNGA Thematic Debate on Human Trafficking
Panel on Enhancing Multilateral Cooperation to
Prevent Trafficking in Persons
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Persons**

Good morning. It is a pleasure to be here with you to exchange ideas on how we can best address human trafficking from a multilateral perspective. It is a grim reality that in the 21st century we continue to face what is essentially modern-day slavery. We have been unable to abolish a centuries old practice of treating a fellow human being as an object to be mastered.

Today, I would like to share a U.S. perspective on what is needed to effectively prevent human trafficking, how multilateral organizations can best help governments, and how the United States Government is partnering with these organizations.

One of the challenges of combating human trafficking is that it requires a concerted effort by Member States on several fronts – prevention, protection of victims, and prosecution of the perpetrators. Too often in discussions about preventing human trafficking we only address part of the equation rather than looking at the total picture, which includes: 1) curbing the demand that would turn people into commodities, 2) supporting the rule of law and combating criminal networks, and 3) confronting poverty which leaves people desperate to escape their current circumstances making them vulnerable to malicious recruitment and exploitation. The assumption that poverty alone results in human trafficking does not take into account that there is a complex web of factors that makes people vulnerable to exploitation.

Any successful effort to combat trafficking must confront not only the supply of trafficked humans, but also the demand for commercial sex and labor trafficking which perpetuates it. Demand for forced labor is created by unscrupulous employers who seek to increase their own profits at the expense of vulnerable employees through the unlawful use of force, fraud, or coercion. Many consumers and businesses would be troubled to know that their purchases are produced wholly or in part by individuals, including

children, subjected to slave-like conditions. Ensuring that complex supply chains are untainted by forced labor is a challenge for both conscientious businesses and consumers. Denying forced labor-made products access to markets will ultimately reduce the incentive to exploit forced labor and encourage ethical business behavior. Increased information on export products and production chains makes such efforts more effective – governments, multilateral organizations and the private sector can collaborate to this end.

Market demand for commercial sex acts creates a profit-incentive for traffickers to entrap more young women and children. Consumers of commercial sex acts need to realize how the demand for commercial sex can directly or indirectly fuel sex trafficking. U.S. policy draws a direct connection between prostitution and human trafficking. As noted in a December 2002 policy decision, the U.S. Government opposes prostitution and any related activities as contributing to the phenomenon of human trafficking.

Additionally, any prevention effort must also look at the context in which trafficking occurs. There are strong links between governments lacking respect for fundamental freedoms and those failing to take sufficient action to combat human trafficking. From Burma to Uzbekistan, there are military, civilian, and government officials who are directly involved or complicit in trafficking for sex, forced labor, unlawful conscription of child soldiers, and trafficking-related bribery and fraud. Too often, victims seeking protection under the law from police, immigration officials, and judges find that those who should be their advocate are in fact furthering their degradation.

There are four essential principles for an effective response to human trafficking. First, it is imperative a government respect the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all persons, including males, females, minorities, citizens, and foreigners alike. Second, there has to be justice under the law. A government must have the ability and the will to hold traffickers (including recruiters, pimps, employers and other exploiters) to fullest account, notably in harsh sentencing that is reflective of the severity of the crime committed. In many countries there is official indifference in the face of labor trafficking in particular, which is too often considered a civil regulatory offense rather than a serious crime. Third, there needs to be an absence of corruption of government officials. And fourth, there needs to be close government cooperation with civil society organizations. Government

ambivalence or even hostility to civil society organizations hinders victim identification and protection. These four principles, markings of governments that govern justly, are central to preventing human trafficking.

Multilateral organizations are integral to assisting committed governments and civil society actors seeking to meet international standards for combating human trafficking. These organizations have a bird's eye view of global anti-trafficking efforts and can identify promising practices that can be replicated and customized. I encourage entities such as UNODC, UNICEF, the ILO and IOM, for example, to focus on their core competencies while ensuring that their respective efforts on the ground are not at cross purposes with each other or with local efforts.

UNODC in its supporting role of the UN Trafficking in Persons Protocol, is uniquely positioned to help requesting governments craft strong anti-trafficking laws and, equally important, to *implement* those laws. UNICEF is best suited to work with governments and civil society to assist and protect child victims.

ILO's expertise, as focal point for various international conventions on forced labor, lies in their ability to assist governments and businesses to address supply chain management.

IOM's expertise is centered on migration. In addition to working with governments and civil society to provide safe and voluntary repatriation and reintegration of trafficked victims, IOM has a tremendous role to play in promoting orderly and humane migration, and facilitating dialogue between the "sender" and "recipient" countries to help prevent migrant laborers from becoming trafficked victims.

The Inter-Agency Cooperation Group Against Trafficking in Persons (ICAT), chaired by UNODC, includes the organizations cited and others. ICAT was established in 2006 as a result of a United Nations Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice resolution spearheaded by strong Japanese leadership and approved by ECOSOC. We encourage UNODC to take ICAT to the next level from information exchange to development of a coordinated approach among the member agencies with due regard to the Conference of Parties to the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.

The United States actively engages with multilateral organizations to address human trafficking. Some highlights include introducing the first anti-demand resolution within the UN Commission on the Status of Women in 2005; working on new initiatives within the G-8; working with the UN, NATO and OSCE to further zero-tolerance of sexual exploitation by multilateral peacekeepers and civilian personnel, and, just last month, appearing before the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child for the first time to present the US Government's efforts to implement the provisions of the Optional Protocols on Children in Armed Conflict and on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution, and Child Pornography.

We are also one of the largest donors to multilateral organizations. Since 2001, an estimated 46 percent of the United States' \$528 million for international anti-trafficking programs has gone to the UN family of agencies, ILO, IOM, OAS, and OSCE.

International organizations should partner with region-specific organizations such as ASEAN, the OSCE and the OAS to foster customized regional anti-trafficking approaches, given that trends and needs vary from region to region. I want to stress the importance of regional work – from the dedicated work of the OSCE's Special Representative on irregular migrants' vulnerability to human trafficking to the Abu Dhabi Dialogue focused on South Asian sending nations and Persian Gulf destination nations. We should build on existing regional efforts.

Multilateral partnerships are essential to eradicating human trafficking. An effective response should be built upon an understanding that prevention addresses not just poverty but the crime and corruption, built upon existing regional multilateral efforts, and comparative advantages of particular agencies and organizations. We've established a good foundation in the last few years, but more effort is needed to reinforce and build on that foundation.

Human trafficking is a dehumanizing crime, and an affront to human dignity. The U.S. stands poised to partner with governments and multilateral organizations the world over. Tomorrow, at 10:00 am, Secretary Rice will release the 8th annual Trafficking in Persons Report which exhaustively documents the efforts of nations around the globe to confront this evil.