

3 April 2012

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser,
President of the 66th Session of the General Assembly,
at the Interactive Dialogue on Human Trafficking: Partnership and
Innovation to End Violence against Women and Girls**

Your Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-Moon, United Nations Secretary-General,
Your Excellency Mr. Milos Koterec, President of ECOSOC,
Mr. Yuri Fedotov, United Nations Under-Secretary-General, Executive Director of UNODC,
Ms. Mira Sorvino, United Nations Goodwill Ambassador against Human Trafficking,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I welcome you to this important interactive dialogue on “Fighting Human Trafficking: Partnership and Innovation to End Violence against Women and Girls.”

Human trafficking is an appalling form of human rights abuse.

It denies individuals their dignity, reducing them to mere objects by shamelessly exploiting them.

It is estimated that, across the globe, 2.4 million people are forced to endure this crime at any one time.

They do so in forced labour, in domestic servitude, in sexual exploitation, and in every country and every region of the world.

The majority of those trafficked are the weakest and most vulnerable members of society: children, women and migrants.

Human trafficking also one of the fastest growing criminal industries, rivalling the trafficking of illicit drugs and arms.

The United Nations also recognizes that it has its own obligations in this area.

In 2003, a zero-tolerance policy was adopted, entitled: “Special Measures for Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse.”

This policy applies to tens of thousands of UN uniformed personnel – troops, military observers, and police.

It also applies to UN international and national staff members, contractors, consultants, and UN volunteers serving in peacekeeping and humanitarian missions.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document, Member States expressed grave concern at the negative effects on development, peace and security and human rights posed by trafficking in human beings, and at the increasing vulnerability of States to this crime.

Member States recognized that trafficking in persons continues to pose a serious challenge to humanity and requires a concerted international response.

The international conference on Trafficking in Women and Girls: Meeting the Challenges Together was held at UN Headquarters in March 2007.

With its emphasis on multi-stakeholder participation, the event was the first to call for a comprehensive and coordinated response to counter human trafficking.

Now, five years after this important event, we have returned to a pressing subject that requires the attention of us all, in today's interactive dialogue follow up to that 2007 Conference.

This interactive dialogue has been organized in cooperation with the Group of Friends United against Human Trafficking and the UN Office on Drugs and Crime.

I thank UNODC for their valuable work and the Group of Friends for their unwavering commitment to this cause.

Today's overall objective is to express solidarity with victims and to unite to end this crime for those who suffer now, and for all future generations.

In today's discussion, we will primarily focus on how to prevent human trafficking and how we can provide protection to its many victims.

Underpinning our strategic activities is the UN Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, adopted by the General Assembly in 2010.

An appraisal of the Plan's progress will be presented to the General Assembly in 2013.

On behalf of the General Assembly, I hope that today's dialogue will provide a solid foundation for that meeting.

Another crucial development that arose from the Plan was the establishment of the UN Voluntary Trust Fund for the victims of human trafficking, especially women and children.

Last week, I had the privilege of being the keynote speaker at a luncheon with the business community co-hosted by UNODC and “End Human Trafficking Now”.

The luncheon aimed to strengthen business engagement in contributing to the prevention and elimination of this terrible crime.

This remarkable Fund is already making a difference in the lives of victims all over the world.

I thank those Member States who have generously donated to the Trust Fund.

However, the funds received to date are not enough.

The Fund needs the strong and continued support of Member States, and civil society, especially the private sector and the media, if it is to succeed as an engine for the delivery of assistance to victims.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Children born today, particularly girls, should not have to face the possibility of being forced into this modern form of slavery tomorrow.

Whether an individual, an organization, a State, I urge everyone to speak out against this terrible crime that does un-speakable damage.

I look forward to the dialogue and the outcome, which will be provided in the form of a President’s Summary.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Sixty four years ago, the General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights proclaiming that all humans are born free, that no one shall be held in slavery or servitude, and that slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms.

Yet today millions of people, the majority of them children and women, are victims of modern day slavery.

We have to re-double our efforts to ensure that concrete and concerted action upholds the rights and freedoms for all, bringing an end to this appalling crime.

Thank you.