



THE PRESIDENT
OF THE
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

26 July 2021

Excellency,

I have the honor to transmit herewith a letter from H.E. Mr. José Alfonso Blanco Conde, Permanent Representative of the Dominican Republic to the United Nations, and H.E. Mr. Enrique Austria Manalo, Permanent Representative of the Republic of the Philippines to the United Nations transmitting a zero draft of the Political Declaration for the High-level Meeting of the General Assembly on the progress achieved in the implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons.

The co-facilitators, via the aforementioned letter, advise delegations that the first informal consultation of the process will be held in the General Assembly Hall on Wednesday, 4 August 2021 at 10 a.m.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Volkan Bozkir', written in a cursive style.

Volkan BOZKIR

All Permanent Representatives and
Permanent Observers to the United Nations
New York



26 July 2021

Excellency,

We have the honour of addressing you in our capacity as co-facilitators of the intergovernmental consultations on the Political Declaration for the High-Level Meeting of the General Assembly on the appraisal of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons.

We have the honour to submit herewith the zero draft of the Political Declaration intended to be adopted at the High-Level Meeting.

We further have the honour to invite all delegations to the first informal consultation to be held in person in the General Assembly Hall on Wednesday, 4 August 2021 at 10:00am. We invite delegations to provide general comments on the Political Declaration during this consultation.

We kindly request delegations to submit written inputs and comments on the zero draft by close of business on Wednesday, 4 August 2021, for inclusion in the compilation text, to our focal points: Ms. Luz Andujar (luzandujar@gmail.com) and Ms. Maria Roseny Fangco (roseny.fangco@dfa.gov.ph).

We look forward to your engagement in this important process.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of our highest consideration.

H.E. Mr. José Alfonso Blanco Conde
Permanent Representative of the Dominican
Republic to the United Nations

H.E. Enrique Austria Manalo
Permanent Representative of the Republic of the
Philippines to the United Nations

All Permanent Representatives and Permanent
Observers to the United Nations
New York

ZERO DRAFT

2021 Political Declaration on the implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons

1. We, the States Members of the United Nations, reaffirm the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons¹ and our commitments made therein, and evince our strong political will to take decisive concerted action to end this heinous crime, wherever it may occur.
2. We recall and reaffirm our commitments to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,² recognizing its integrated and indivisible nature and acknowledging that the 2030 Agenda includes commitments that relate to combating all forms of trafficking in persons, recognize the importance of partnerships in this regard, and emphasize that the 2030 Agenda and the Global Plan of Action are mutually reinforcing.
3. We reaffirm the crucial importance of universal ratification of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime³ and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime,⁴ taking into consideration the central role of those instruments in the fight against trafficking in persons, and urge Member States that have not yet done so to consider ratifying or acceding to the Convention and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, as a matter of priority. We urge States parties to those instruments to implement them fully and effectively, and welcome the decision of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime to establish a mechanism for the review of the implementation of the Convention and the Protocols thereto.
4. We reaffirm our recognition that “trafficking in persons” shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation, which includes, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs, as set forth in the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children.
5. We also reaffirm the importance of universal ratification and implementation of other relevant international instruments that address trafficking in persons, and recall the Global Compact for Safe Orderly and Regular Migration (2018),⁵ the Global Compact on Refugees (2018) and the CEDAW General Recommendation No. 38 (2020) on trafficking in women and girls in the context of global migration.⁶

¹ Resolution [64/293](#).

² Resolution [70/1](#).

³ United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 2225, No. 39574

⁴ Ibid., vol. 2237, No. 39574.

⁵ Res 73/195.

⁶ CEDAW/C/GC/38.

6. We reiterate our commitment to prevent trafficking in persons, including through targeted education and awareness-raising campaigns. We welcome the designation of 30 July as the World Day against Trafficking in Persons.⁷ We commit to intensify our efforts to prevent and address, with a view to eliminating, the demand that fosters trafficking, especially of women and girls, for all forms of exploitation, and in this regard to put in place or to enhance preventive measures, including legislative and punitive measures, to deter exploiters of trafficked persons, as well as ensure their accountability. We reaffirm the crucial importance of addressing sociocultural patterns that sustain gender inequality and discrimination, including the culture of tolerance towards violence against women and girls, that make women and girls particularly vulnerable to trafficking in persons and commit to include more women in leadership positions and decision-making processes.
7. We reaffirm our commitment to address the social, economic, cultural, political and other factors that make people vulnerable to trafficking in persons, such as poverty, unemployment, inequality, gender inequality and discrimination, social exclusion, marginalization, corruption, and humanitarian emergencies, including armed conflicts and natural disasters.
8. We express our serious concern over the significant and enduring trafficking of women and children, recognize that trafficking in persons disproportionately affects them, and call upon Member States to enact laws and establish comprehensive policies, programmes and other measures that, amongst other elements, provide for the protection of trafficked women and children from revictimization and appropriate assistance and protection in the best interests of the child.
9. We express grave concern that the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated existing vulnerabilities to trafficking in persons, making victims increasingly challenged to survive due to either abandonment or increased confinement by traffickers, reduced access to assistance, and the restricted or complete lack of ability to either work or return home. We recognize the need to place increased priority and urgency on planning and coordination, both national and international, to mitigate the impact of ongoing and crisis-induced challenges on trafficking responses. We note with concern that sexual and gender-based violence increased globally during the pandemic, and commit to intensifying efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in public and private spheres, including trafficking in persons for sexual exploitation.
10. We express solidarity with and compassion for victims and survivors, call for full respect of their human rights, and, recognizing their role as agents of change in the global fight against trafficking in persons, acknowledge the need to incorporate their perspective and experience in all efforts to prevent and combat trafficking in persons. We commit to actively involve trafficked persons in designing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating such initiatives. We will provide victim-centred care, assistance and services for their recovery and rehabilitation, working with civil society and other relevant partners, monitor and regularly assess such assistance, with the input of victims and survivors, and seek to enhance the provision of long-term support. We will ensure that victims are not adversely affected by laws, policies and other actions taken by Government authorities and communities.

⁷ See resolution [68/192](#).

11. We will also undertake appropriate measures for access to justice and protections for victims in criminal justice processes, including measures to ensure that such access is never conditional on participation in criminal proceedings, to provide for the admission of digital evidence to alleviate the reliance on victims' testimonies, and to specifically provide for access to remedies and compensation. We also commit to intensify our efforts to give effect to the principle of non-punishment of victims of trafficking, which should apply to any unlawful activity carried out by a trafficked person as a direct consequence of their trafficking situation, regardless of the gravity or seriousness of the offence committed, as well as to all to all types of punishment, including criminal, civil, administrative and immigration offences, or other forms of punishment. We commit to do so including by ensuring our responses include active and fair identification procedures, uphold the irrelevance of the victim's supposed consent to being trafficked, and ensure access to remedy for victims who have been unjustly penalized for illegal acts committed in connection with their victimization.
12. We reaffirm our commitment to continue our efforts to criminalize trafficking in persons in all its forms, and to strengthen cooperation and coordination among Member States in countries of origin, transit and destination in order to disrupt and dismantle criminal networks involved in such crimes, including through, inter alia, the enhancement of information-sharing with full respect for domestic law and mutual legal assistance in combating crimes that might be connected with trafficking in persons, such as money-laundering, corruption, illicit financial flows, the smuggling of migrants and all forms of organized crime. We commit to enhancing the capacity of law enforcement and criminal justice systems to identify, investigate and prosecute cases of trafficking in persons, to analyze financial flows and to detect those criminal networks. We commit to developing and strengthening national referral mechanisms and to use technology to sustain victim referrals and services. We commit to strengthening the capacity of criminal justice practitioners, including judges, to enable a victim-centered, child- and gender-sensitive approach to care and assistance of victims.
13. We are seriously concerned that the scale of global resourcing to fight trafficking in persons does not match the scale of the challenge and in this regard:
 - (a) We reaffirm our strong support for the United Nations voluntary trust fund for victims of trafficking in persons, especially women and children, established in accordance with the Global Plan of Action, aimed at providing victims of trafficking in persons with humanitarian, legal and financial aid through established channels of assistance, such as governmental, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, and we invite all stakeholders to contribute to the trust fund, including through the announcement of pledges at the quadrennial high level appraisals of the Global Plan of Action;
 - (b) We acknowledge the need to provide sufficient, stable and predictable resources for national trafficking in persons strategies, stakeholders and activities;
 - (c) We stress the need to intensify international cooperation, including capacity-building and technical assistance, especially for developing countries, aimed at strengthening their ability to prevent all forms of trafficking, including supporting their development programmes.

14. We reiterate, in the strongest terms possible, the importance of strengthening collective action by Member States to end trafficking in persons, including through regional, subregional and cross-regional mechanisms, and through partnerships and initiatives with the United Nations system and other stakeholders, including, inter alia, regional and international organizations, the private sector, the media, parliamentarians and civil society, including non-governmental organizations, academic institutions and faith-based organizations, as well as national human rights institutions, where they exist, with regard to the Paris Principles.⁸ We will promote partnerships and engage the private sector and civil society, in developing and implementing sustainable initiatives to prevent and combat trafficking in persons. In particular, we recognize the work of the Special Rapporteur of the Human Rights Council on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, and the Special Rapporteur of the Human Rights Council on contemporary forms of slavery, in combating trafficking in persons, and welcome their continued efforts to implement the Global Plan of Action and the present political declaration.
15. We also reiterate the need to continue to enhance the overall organization and coherence in the efforts of the United Nations system to respond to trafficking in persons, especially in ensuring support to Member States. In this regard, while recalling that the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons was established to foster coordination and cooperation among relevant United Nations system entities and other international organizations involved in combating trafficking in persons, with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime as its coordinator, we urge the Secretary-General to continue efforts to strengthen coordination within the United Nations system and to inform Member States thereof through existing reporting channels.
16. We recognize the important role played by the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons in the United Nations system, and recognize with appreciation the ongoing efforts of its member entities, jointly and separately, to respond to trafficking in persons. We invite the Group to continue to increase its activities related to the implementation of the Global Plan of Action and, to that end, to incorporate aspects of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development relevant to preventing and combating trafficking in persons and to continue to advance the coordination of future activities and avoidance of duplication of efforts. We encourage the Coordination Group to continue to expand and diversify its membership to include international entities that have a role in addressing trafficking in persons in all regions.
17. We reaffirm the central role of the work of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in the global fight against trafficking in persons, particularly in providing technical assistance to Member States, upon their request, to implement the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, by making use of existing capacity-building tools, lessons learned from Member States and expertise available in other international organizations.
18. We will endeavor to provide funding for the relevant offices of the United Nations system which are mandated to combat trafficking in persons.

⁸ Resolution 48/134, annex.

19. We reiterate the need for improved data collection and analysis of trafficking in persons, disaggregated by sex, age and other relevant factors, including the form of exploitation, and using systematic and consistent criteria, to effectively counter trafficking in persons. We thus recognize the importance of improved data collection by national authorities and will enhance international cooperation to this end, including through capacity-building, financial support and technical assistance. We will do so consistent with our national legislation on data protection, if applicable, and our international obligations related to privacy.
20. We acknowledge the importance of the biennial Global Report on Trafficking in Persons, prepared by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime pursuant to the Global Plan of Action, and request the Office to continue to collect information on patterns, forms and flows of trafficking in persons, at the national, regional and international levels, in a balanced, reliable and comprehensive manner, to be published in the Global Report, and in ongoing research to estimate the prevalence of trafficking in persons, in close cooperation and collaboration with Member States.
21. We express serious concern about the lack of political will and commitment of financial resources to effectively address trafficking in persons in situations of armed conflict and humanitarian emergencies, including natural disasters. In this regard:
 - (a) We recognize that refugees and migrants in large movements are at greater risk of being trafficked and will work to prevent trafficking among those affected by displacement, including through targeted measures to identify victims of trafficking in persons or those at risk of trafficking in places of first arrival. We reiterate our commitment to take steps to address the particular vulnerabilities of women and children during the journey from country of origin to country of arrival, including their potential exposure to trafficking in persons, including through the development of age- and gender-sensitive policies and programmes.]
 - (b) We commit to intensify our efforts to create and strengthen regular pathways for migration to reduce the exposure of people on the move to trafficking in persons, in line with the Global Compact for Safe Orderly and Regular Migration, including through access to residence or work permits, humanitarian visas, family reunification, private sponsorship and other discretionary measures.
 - (c) We encourage the training of humanitarian and peacekeeping personnel to be deployed in humanitarian emergencies and peacekeeping operations on responding to trafficking in persons and on gender expertise, child protection and sexual exploitation and abuse. We encourage all entities and bodies of the United Nations system to train their personnel and to build their technical capacity to assess situations for instances of trafficking in persons in armed conflict and humanitarian emergencies, and to work together to identify, prevent and respond effectively to victims of trafficking.
22. We express our deep concern about the increasing links in some regions between armed groups, including terrorist groups, and trafficking in persons, involving the coercion of women and girls into marriages or sexual slavery, and pressing men and boys to act as forced labour or combatants.

23. We note with concern the increasing criminal misuse of information and communications technologies, in particular the internet, to facilitate various aspects of trafficking in persons, including recruitment, control, financial transactions, and various forms of exploitation, including online child sexual exploitation and the production and distribution of child sexual abuse material. We also emphasize the importance of countering such misuse while respecting human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the right to privacy, in compliance with other obligations under international law. In this regard:
- a) We call for the strengthening of law enforcement digital expertise and capacity to conduct proportionate, lawful, accountable and necessary investigations in the cyberspace, including the Darkweb, and seize associated electronic evidence. We encourage the appropriate use by law enforcement of technology-based solutions that address the global scope of trafficking in persons.
 - b) We further encourage the appropriate use of technology and innovative tools by practitioners and central authorities to increase international and cross-border cooperation in criminal matters. We recognize the need for ethical use of technology by law enforcement, consistent with human rights standards, including the right to privacy.
 - c) We call for effective partnerships between the public sector, civil society, academia and the private sector, including technology companies, to enhance innovation, cooperation and the use of technology.
24. We reaffirm our commitment to prevent and combat trafficking in persons for the purpose of organ removal. We condemn the involvement of criminal groups and unethical medical personnel in trafficking in persons for the purpose of organ removal. We commit to adopting ethical and transparent regulations governing organ donations, ensuring that our legal frameworks, programmes and policies addressing trafficking in persons explicitly include and address the purpose of organ removal as a form of exploitation, and to resource such efforts, including the ready provision of effective and needs-based victim protection and health services. We call for better coordination and collaboration between criminal justice actors and medical professionals, and strengthened capacity and skills to proactively identify and investigate these cases.
25. We reaffirm the importance of taking measures to prevent and combat trafficking in persons in supply chains, including deterring and penalizing fraudulent and abusive recruitment practices. We encourage the private sector to adopt ethical and transparent practices in their procurement and supply chains, and strongly urge them to regularly disclose and provide further access to relevant information on these practices. We are mindful of the need to ensure that all actors in global supply chains, including intermediaries, who purchase or benefit from the labour of trafficking victims, are held accountable, including through sufficiently stringent sanctions, by adopting and enforcing appropriate legislation and practices. We also emphasize the need to establish firewalls between immigration checks and labour inspections. We stress the need to develop awareness-raising and educational programmes in partnership with civil society and the media to change public attitudes of acceptance of the use of cheap labour in the production of goods. We also urge the Secretary-General to ensure that all United Nations procurement is free from trafficking in persons.

26. We acknowledge that the gaps between the Global Plan of Action and its implementation by Member States should be closed, and recognize that arrangements are needed to ensure the systematic follow-up to and review of all of the commitments we are making at the present high-level meeting, including in the quadrennial high-level meetings of the General Assembly to appraise progress achieved in the implementation of the Global Plan of Action. Further to this, we will promote the development of clearer analysis of successful counter-trafficking responses, and ensure that monitoring and evaluation frameworks include explicit consideration of how any law, policy or practical measure affects trafficking victims before such measures are implemented.