



Summary of the informal interactive multi-stakeholder hearing as part of the preparatory process 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

30 June 2025, United Nations Headquarters, New York

Introduction

The President of the General Assembly convened on 30 June 2025, an informal interactive multi-stakeholder hearing as part of the preparatory process 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, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 79/286.

The multi-stakeholder hearing provided Member States and other relevant stakeholders with an opportunity to contribute to the process leading up to the high-level meeting on the appraisal of the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons including by sharing practical experiences in counter-trafficking efforts and discussing key recommendations concerning action and policy emerging from the enduring and emerging issues relating to trafficking in persons.

The hearing was divided into an opening segment followed by an interactive panel discussion and closing remarks by the co-facilitators to produce a political declaration on the implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in persons.

Opening segment

H.E. Philemon Yang, President of the General Assembly, in his opening remarks delivered on his behalf by a Vice-President, underscored the continued importance of the Global Plan of Action to the implementation of the UN Convention against Transnational Organised Crime and its Protocol on Trafficking in Persons. Stressing that the four-year appraisal is a critical moment for collective accountability, he called for a political declaration that reflects the urgency of ending trafficking in persons and amplifies the voices of those most vulnerable to exploitation. With a 35% increase in victims since 2019, including a rise in child trafficking and a shift toward forced labour, he warned of traffickers' growing use of digital tools and the evolving nature of exploitation. Highlighting the complex drivers of trafficking, he called for a coordinated, adaptable global response, urged Member States to contribute to the UN Voluntary Trust Fund for Victims of Trafficking in Persons, and emphasised the essential role of civil society, academia, and the private sector in prevention and survivor support.

Ms. Ghada Fathi Waly, Executive Director of UNODC and Director-General of UNOV, highlighted the critical role that the Global Plan of Action has played over the past 15 years in

shaping collective anti-trafficking efforts. It mandated UNODC's Global Report on Trafficking in Persons – an essential data source on trafficking flows – and established the UN Voluntary Trust Fund, which supports thousands of victims annually. Ms. Waly noted that traffickers are adapting to exploit new technologies and gaps in the rule of law and stressed the urgency of renewed and inclusive responses. Ms. Waly emphasized the importance of engaging all stakeholders, including civil society organisations, the private sector, first responders, and particularly survivors. She drew attention to UNODC's recent hosting of the first-ever Global Forum for Survivors, whose "Call for Action" should guide upcoming negotiations of the political declaration. She urged this appraisal to result in stronger, more effective and survivor-centred action to end trafficking in persons.

Mr. Pär Liljert, Director of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) Office to the UN in New York, reflected on the milestone adoption of the UN Protocol on Trafficking in Persons, particularly its emphasis on the protection and recovery of victims under Article 6. He urged Member States to assess whether current efforts meet the minimum standards for supporting survivors and called for more effective, rights-based, and coordinated approaches, including the development of national referral mechanisms. Noting that many traffickers evade detection, as trafficking increasingly occurs online, he stressed the need for better use of technology and stronger partnerships across all sectors. He also highlighted the lack of data on labour exploitation and welcomed IOM's collaboration with UNODC to develop a global administrative data classification system for trafficking in persons as a step toward more consistent and comprehensive research.

Panel Discussion

The panel discussion was moderated by Ms. Delphine Schantz, Representative, UNODC New York Liaison Office. Panellists addressed questions relating to the enduring challenges related to trafficking in persons, particularly relating to children and forced labour, as well as emerging issues, including trafficking for forced criminality and the increasing use of technology to both facilitate and combat trafficking in persons.

Ms. Siobhán Mullally, Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, underscored the vulnerability of children to trafficking in persons, with heightened risks for children who are migrants, stateless, displaced, or from minority or indigenous communities. She stressed the importance of prevention, protection, and accountability mechanisms, especially in contexts of poverty, conflict, and displacement, and called for strengthened monitoring and accountability, early and individualized identification procedures, trauma-informed and inclusive protection services, and stronger legal safeguards to children in asylum contexts.

Ms. Evelyn Chumbow, Survivor of trafficking in persons, and Advocacy and Survivors Leadership Program Director at The Human Trafficking Legal Centre, recounted her survivor testimony of being trafficked as a child for forced labour to the United States. Ms. Chumbow stressed the need for support for survivors and called on Member States to compensate survivors for their expertise, address the root causes of trafficking such as poverty,

reform global immigration systems to prevent exploitation, hold perpetrators and complicit institutions accountable, confront systemic racism, as well as to provide support and invest in trafficking survivors.

Ms. Catherine Kirkendall, Executive Director of the US Office at Hagar International, warned of the growing crisis of trafficking for forced criminality, particularly in cyber-scam operations across Southeast Asia, which are rapidly spreading globally. She stressed that many of these survivors remain unrecognised, are criminalised instead of protected, and live in fear of arrest. Ms. Kirkendall called on Member States to prioritise recognition of forced criminality, ensure non-criminalisation of victims, and dismantle trafficking networks by targeting their enablers – including unregulated technology platforms and anonymous financial systems – through stronger cross-border cooperation and law enforcement collaboration.

Mr. Colin Ward, Engagement Lead of Marinus Analytics in UK and Europe, highlighted the dual role of technology in trafficking in persons: while traffickers increasingly exploit digital platforms and artificial intelligence for anonymity, deception, and targeting vulnerable individuals, technology also offers powerful tools to combat exploitation. Mr. Ward called for cross-sector collaboration through central intelligence hubs that facilitate fast coordinated responses. He stressed that artificial intelligence must be deployed with strong safeguards to avoid harm to marginalised groups and emphasised the need to train frontline officers in trauma-informed engagement to ensure the effective and ethical use of these technologies.

Key Messages and Recommendations for the 2025 Political Declaration

1. Provide for greater commitment to supporting victims of trafficking in persons and survivor-centred counter-trafficking strategies

Many participants emphasised the importance of creating counter-trafficking strategies in partnerships with civil society organisations, especially survivor-led groups. Many stakeholders called for effective and timely access to justice and unconditional support for victims and non-punishment of victims. The role of national human rights institutions was mentioned. Calls were made for non-conditional access to services and recognition of the “invisible victim” in the context of under-identification, and compensation for survivors as experts. Stakeholders drew attention to the vast under-identification of victims and urged Member States to prioritise trauma-informed, identity-sensitive strategies and empower community, health and faith-based actors for early victim detection.

Participants highlighted the essential role placed by civil society organizations in prevention, victim support and accountability.

2. Address the dangers of the misuse of technology in facilitating trafficking in persons and encourage enhanced use of technology in counter-trafficking efforts

Participants emphasised the rapidly increasing threat of trafficking in persons through the misuse of communications and information technology. In particular, it was noted that this form of trafficking in persons is disproportionately impacting women and children – for example, traffickers are using technology in new ways including artificial intelligence to create

child sexual abuse material. Participants also drew attention to the use of cryptocurrency and encrypted communication.

Stakeholders called for greater engagement of the private sector, including corporate accountability from technology companies and internet service providers, noting the use of technology platforms by traffickers to recruit victims, facilitate exploitation, finance transactions and evade prosecution. Both mandatory corporate ethical technology practices and the use of incentives, including tax breaks and reputational visibility, to encourage corporate action on this issue, were raised.

On the other hand, participants stressed the need for Member States to facilitate the use of technology in counter-trafficking efforts, including the use and development of artificial intelligence and verification tools, in partnership with technology firms. It was mentioned that public-private partnerships could be used to educate and empower communities to prevent victims from falling prey to traffickers. Calls were also made for stronger regulation of digital platforms and global coordination on governance of technology, as well as co-ordinated capacity-building to counter technology-facilitated trafficking in persons.

3. Recognize emerging forms of trafficking in persons

Participants stressed the importance of the Political Declaration addressing emerging forms of trafficking in persons. In particular, participants noted with alarm the increasing and rapidly spreading issue of trafficking for forced criminality and urged Member States to address this form of trafficking with a co-ordinated approach that involves government, law enforcement, civil society and the private sector. Stakeholders drew attention to the evidence that criminal networks are recruiting vulnerable persons to conduct crimes such as on-line scams and fraud under coercion, often detaining them in large-scale compounds. Stakeholders stressed that the Political Declaration should address the regulatory gaps and fragmented enforcement that allow these compounds to thrive. One panellist urged Member States to target the enablers of the criminal networks carrying out such crimes, including unregulated technology platforms and financial systems. Stakeholders further urged Member States to recognise technology-facilitated human trafficking trends, including trafficking of persons into these online scam centres.

Participants emphasised that the principle of non-punishment needs to be respected in the context of this emerging form of trafficking, re-iterating that it is important that criminal penalties against victims of trafficking in persons for crimes committed as a direct result of their trafficking should be prohibited.

Additionally, participants drew attention to other emerging forms of exploitation or trafficking in persons which are sometimes overlooked, including commercial surrogacy and other reproductive trafficking, organ trafficking, tourism-related sexual exploitation and female genital mutilation.

4. Address the disproportionate impact of trafficking in persons on women, children and vulnerable populations

Participants emphasised the disproportionate impact of trafficking in person on women, children and vulnerable populations, driven by poverty, conflict, gender inequality and other

causes. Participants stressed the need for gender-sensitive approaches to combatting trafficking in persons that address specific vulnerabilities.

Many participants noted with concern that children represent over one-third of detected trafficking victims globally, and that women and girls remain particularly vulnerable to sexual exploitation and forced marriage, while boys are particularly vulnerable to forced labour. The importance of ensuring that national laws adopt child-specific anti-trafficking measures and strengthened monitoring and accountability in relation to child trafficking was underscored.

The importance of ensuring the involvement of youth and investing in ethical youth-informed technology and digital literacy was also mentioned.

Several stakeholders stressed the need to target demand in the context of trafficking for sexual exploitation and called for cultural shifts to challenge systemic tolerance to the trade in women and girls. Stakeholders also urged Member States to recognize the intersection between trafficking in persons and other forms of gender-based violence.

5. Enshrine a human-rights based approach in counter-trafficking responses

Many stakeholders highlighted that the Political Declaration should ground anti-trafficking policies in human rights, with trauma-informed, survivor-centred and inclusive approaches.

6. Address root causes and drivers of trafficking in persons

Member States, panellists and stakeholders stressed the need to address the root causes and drivers of trafficking in persons, including poverty, unequal development, climate change, and conflict. Irregular migration was also noted as a source of vulnerability.

Reference was made to areas experiencing surges in human trafficking due to armed conflict, organised crime and state fragility. Escalated cases of human trafficking tied to organized crime were reported in the context of state instability, and calls were made for international support to the rule of law and stable governments.

7. Build and invest in stronger partnerships across sectors, including the financial sector

Many stakeholders urged Member States to prioritise partnerships across sectors, including with civil society organisations, the private sector and the financial sector in counter-trafficking strategies.

It was also noted that there is a link between trafficking flows and informal financial markets and there was a call for systemic reform of the global financial architecture. There was a call for a rights-based digital finance regulation and expanded financial inclusion.

8. Enhance global, regional and national co-ordination in the response to trafficking in persons

Stakeholders underscored the importance of strengthened co-ordination at the international, regional and national levels, noting that the scale of the crime is global in scope, with transnational trafficking networks operating throughout the world. It was stressed that Member

States should harmonise legal frameworks, enhance information sharing and co-operate on cross-border investigations and re-integration of victims and co-ordinated capacity building.

A call was made for permanent multilateral co-ordination mechanisms and enhanced use of early warning systems to strengthen the collective capacity to respond to human trafficking. Further, it was stressed that there is a need for concrete assistance to Member States from the United Nations, and multilateral and regional organisations.

Enhanced co-ordination at the law enforcement level was also mentioned, noting the increasingly transnational nature of human trafficking. Stakeholders also urged Member States to commit to enhanced data collection to strengthen insight into trafficking flows, trends and challenges.

Closing remarks

The Multi-Stakeholder Hearing was closed by statements from the co-facilitators to produce a political declaration on the implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in persons, the Permanent Representatives of the Republic of Cyprus and the Republic of Tajikistan.

H.E. Ms. Maria Michail, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Cyprus, thanked the President of the General Assembly for entrusting the co-facilitators with the responsibility of leading the negotiation process for the political declaration, and reaffirmed their commitment to a transparent, inclusive, and representative process aimed at delivering a concise and focused declaration. Her Excellency recalled the adoption of the Global Plan of Action in 2010 as a milestone in global efforts to protect victims, prosecute perpetrators, and strengthen coordination, and underscored that the upcoming high-level meeting is a critical opportunity to assess progress, address gaps, and reaffirm global determination to end trafficking in persons.

H.E. Mr. Jonibek Hikmat, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Tajikistan, reaffirmed that, despite progress, trafficking in persons remains a persistent global issue impacting all states. Citing the 2024 UNODC Global Report on Trafficking in Persons, he noted with concern the 25% rise in victim detection since 2019, following a pandemic-related decrease. He underscored the indispensable role of civil society, academia, the private sector, and the media. Thanking all participants for their engagement, he expressed confidence that the multi-stakeholder hearing had provided valuable insights into both enduring and emerging challenges and emphasised that practical experience shared by stakeholders is vital for shaping a meaningful Political Declaration.