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Statement submitted by Company of the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul, Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, International Council of Jewish Women, International Movement for Fraternal Union among Races and Peoples, Istituto Internazionale Maria Ausiliatrice delle Salesiane di Don Bosco, National Council of Women of the United States, Passionists International, Salesian Missions, Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, Society of Catholic Medical Missionaries, UNANIMA International, and United States Federation for Middle East Peace, non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.



Statement

Ending the demand for trafficking in girls

The United Nations has become very active in its condemnation of human trafficking, which directly violates various articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, including article 4 on involuntary servitude and the prohibition of slavery, article 13 on the right to freedom of movement, article 16 on freedom from forced marriage and article 23 on free choice of employment. Yet human trafficking is one of the fastest growing types of crime in the world. Statistics vary widely, but according to the report of the Secretary-General of 23 July 2012 (A/67/170), 20.9 million persons have been trafficked into forced labour, with 43 per cent trafficked for sexual exploitation.

Trafficking has become the most lucrative crime business after drugs (according to the United States Department of State) because the “merchandise” can be sold over and over again. According to the United Nations Children’s Fund, the global market for child trafficking alone brings in over \$12 billion per year, with over 1 to 2 million child victims. The United States Department of State estimates that up to 800,000 people are bought and sold across international boundaries every year. Of these, 50 per cent are children, mostly girls, and the majority are sexually exploited. Since the trafficking of children is often more hidden, this crime actually may be underreported.

Persons most likely to be trafficked are women and children; 98 per cent of persons trafficked for sex and 55 per cent trafficked for labour are women and girls (according to the International Labour Organization). Children are sold for work, begging, sexual exploitation, drug smuggling, forced marriage or adoptions, as child soldiers, or for organ harvesting. Girls are especially vulnerable to the danger of being trafficked for the following reasons:

(a) Gender inequity: Girls are the most powerless of all vulnerable populations because of social and cultural factors that devalue women and girls. Girls often have no control over their destiny, and their lower status makes them more likely to be voluntarily sold by their families;

(b) Poverty: Parents who voluntarily sell their children to traffickers often do so because they are living in poverty and cannot afford to feed their children, or think that it represents an opportunity for a better life for the child. Girls usually have fewer prospects for employment, with lower potential salary contributions, or require dowries;

(c) Gender imbalance: Abduction is another source of trafficked children. Countries with extreme gender imbalances have a high number of kidnappings, mostly from poor areas and from neighbouring countries. Given a cultural preference for male children, families may buy a son; or given a gender ratio distortion and shortage of brides, women and girls become “commodities” in countries with strong preferences for male children.

Indeed, any factor that increases the “supply” of vulnerable people, such as natural disasters, migration, unemployment, lack of education and domestic violence, will tend to increase the incidence of trafficking.

Only recently has it become more common to look at the factors that increase “demand” for trafficked persons, such as:

- Desire for cheap labour and public insistence on cheap goods
- Organized crime, generating high profits and low risks for traffickers
- Advertising by the tourist industry that creates a “need” like sex tourism
- Pornography, perhaps the most potent driver in the sex trade
- Ignorance and false ideas (for example, “having sex with a virgin cures HIV/AIDS”)
- Societal norms that permit the use of children in brothels, some as young as three years of age, and as soldiers (including girls), some as young as nine years of age

Trafficking in children has many complex causes, but perhaps the greatest single factor in the increasing demand is the production of pornography. Pornography is becoming more explicit, more violent and more degrading, and the Internet has made it ever more accessible to teens and young adults. In an analysis of a number of Internet pornography sites, 88 per cent depicted physical aggression, 94 per cent of which was directed against women or children.

Example of a best practice in stopping the demand

Education is one of the best empowerment tools to help children and families protect themselves from traffickers. Last year UNANIMA International piloted a “youth-to-youth” educational programme in Nairobi on “Stop the Demand”. A core group of 20 young men and women were given a two-day training workshop on trafficking: what it is; what are the causes; supply and demand factors; its relationship with smuggling, migration and slavery; and how to recognize trafficking. Continuing their own monthly educational experiences, the group in turn went into the field to offer awareness programmes for other groups of young people 13 to 20 years of age for the rest of the year, hosting 13 workshops that reached 362 young people. They incorporated experiences in art, music, poetry and dance to vary the activities. It was considered so successful that an additional core group will be added this year.

Conclusion

No “cultural” excuses can justify the sexual exploitation of children, resulting as it does in long-lasting physical and psychological trauma, disease, drug addiction, pregnancy, malnutrition, social ostracism and death (see United States Department of State: Trafficking in Persons Report 2012). Trafficking in children is child slavery, and a gross violation of human rights. The prostitution of children is prohibited in most countries around the world. United Nations documents, such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child, forbid the exploitative use of children for labour, armed conflict, prostitution or pornography; in pornography performances and materials (article 34 (c)); and urge nations to take all measures to prevent the abduction of, sale of, or traffic in children (article 35). That document also promotes measures that contribute to the physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration of the child (article 39), preventing revictimization.

Recommendations

We call on the Commission on the Status of Women to urge Member States to:

(a) Strengthen the enforcement of internationally agreed commitments designed to prevent human trafficking, protect victims and prosecute traffickers, particularly the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime;

(b) Urge the 39 Member States that have not ratified the Protocol to do so immediately;

(c) Increase development aid, especially aid that is targeted to the creation of legitimate income-generating possibilities for women and families with children and to educate and empower girls;

(d) Intensify efforts to prosecute people who exploit children in brothels, massage parlours, strip clubs and in street prostitution;

(e) Promote sanctions against law enforcement agencies that refuse to enforce laws against trafficking and dismantle criminal networks that profit from the sale of human beings;

(f) Recommend more stringent sanctions on the publication or transmission of pornography in electronic or paper form;

(g) Publicize the illegal nature and penalties for trafficking, and promote media campaigns dealing with human rights for children;

(h) Provide gender-centred education and information/awareness campaigns to warn children about the dangers of trafficking, and campaigns targeting males, to strike at the “demand” side of the issue (United Nations Population Fund);

(i) Encourage Governments to share best practices in the production of informational material and sensitization programmes for teachers, parents, health-care workers, and law enforcement agencies;

(j) Support the provision of safe places and treatment for child victims/survivors of trafficking, as well as programmes to reintegrate them into their society, as described in the draft basic principles on the right to an effective remedy for trafficked persons (see A/66/283, annex).

Trafficking is truly a global problem: the Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime report that people are trafficked from 127 countries and exploited in 137 countries, affecting every continent and every type of economy. Since 154 nations have ratified the Trafficking in Persons Protocol, there seems to be the political will to address this problem at the international level, prosecuting and convicting traffickers, and providing legal protection and redress to victims. This is the year to strengthen our resolve.