



**PERMANENT MISSION
OF THE PRINCIPALITY OF LIECHTENSTEIN
TO THE UNITED NATIONS
NEW YORK**

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SECURITY COUNCIL – OPEN DEBATE

TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS IN CONFLICT SITUATIONS

STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR CHRISTIAN WENAWESER

PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PRINCIPALITY OF LIECHTENSTEIN TO THE UNITED NATIONS

Mr. President,

I have the honor to deliver this statement on behalf of Australia, Switzerland and my own country Liechtenstein.

We welcome this opportunity to highlight the scourge of human trafficking in conflict. We are grateful to Spain for submitting an ambitious resolution which we have cosponsored. Modern slavery and human trafficking are both causes and symptoms of instability and conflicts and a threat to both development as well as peace and security. Trafficking in persons is a human rights violation and it can constitute a war crime, a crime against humanity or even genocide. Modern slavery, often resulting from trafficking, is currently at an unprecedented scale and constitutes a crime that undermines the humanity of its victims. The Global Slavery Index estimates that 45 million¹ people live in conditions that qualify as modern slavery – more than ever before, and in spite of the absolute prohibition of slavery under international law. Each and every single country is affected, which is why it is our joint responsibility to put an end to

¹ <http://www.globalslaveryindex.org/findings/>

these crimes. The 2030 Agenda provides us with a new platform to address these issues. Slavery and trafficking are mentioned in the SDGs on gender equality, on decent work for all and on the rule of law – an apt reflection of their cross-cutting nature. Fighting human trafficking is not just a law enforcement challenge – it is a prerequisite for sustainable development and human rights protection. Work on the issue must therefore also be pursued with resolve in the General Assembly.

Mr. President,

Modern slavery and human trafficking are not only one of the biggest human rights scandals of our time. They are also amongst the most lucrative business models of organized crime – which fund armed conflict. Forced labor and human trafficking is a 150 billion USD industry worldwide²; that is more than the annual GDP of 70% of UN Member States³. One way of combatting these crimes is to “follow the money”, in other words, to disrupt the financial flows that are associated with it. The involvement of financial institutions and in particular Financial Intelligence Units (FIUs) is key in such efforts. We welcome the reference to the need to use existing criminal laws, including on anti-money laundering, anti-corruption and anti-bribery laws, to investigate, disrupt and dismantle trafficking networks in the resolution and are committed to exploring ways to follow up by using the expertise of our national systems.

Mr. President,

The Security Council can also play an important role by addressing the “protection gap” in existing international response mechanisms. The humanitarian Cluster System in particular does not address several key areas of vulnerability to human trafficking. Anti-trafficking strategies should be included in the planning for conflict and humanitarian response. Furthermore the Security Council should encourage relevant UN system entities to carry out targeted information campaigns to protect civilians vulnerable to trafficking in conflict. Modern

² <https://polarisproject.org/facts>

³ <http://databank.worldbank.org/data/download/GDP.pdf>

slavery prevails with widespread impunity and an overwhelming number of cases are never prosecuted, even though the duty to prevent and punish slavery is an erga omnes obligation of all States. This large impunity gap has created the space for human trafficking and modern slavery to thrive. There is a clear need for better cooperation amongst States to prosecute perpetrators of these crimes that are often transnational. The Palermo Protocol in particular can make an important contribution to this end and we hope that it will be universally ratified soon. Where national judiciaries have failed, there is a clear case for involving and making use of international criminal justice – for example the International Criminal Court. Given the universal nature of the phenomenon of modern slavery, the Court could play a dual role: creating incentives for States to investigate and prosecute at the national level and doing so itself where the impunity gap persists.

Mr. President,

Although human trafficking affects a cross-section of the population, some groups are more vulnerable. Sexual and gender based violence are exacerbated in armed conflict, and trafficking in persons in situations of armed conflict has a particular impact on women and girls. Reports from refugees and migrants arriving in Europe suggest that a vast majority of women and girls have been sexually exploited⁴ on their flight from conflict situations. This is something we need to keep in mind in our humanitarian response as well as in our migration and human rights policy. We need to strengthen our own capabilities to identify victims of trafficking and exploitation in migration movements, and ensure that they receive appropriate assistance and remedy. We should also, individually and collectively, assist and protect those vulnerable to, or victimized by, human trafficking and make sure that victims of human trafficking in conflict are not prosecuted or punished for their experience. It is important to note that without identification and recognition as victims of these crimes, their access to reparations once transitional justice measures have been taken is seriously hampered. In this regard, we wish to

⁴ <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/migrants-being-raped-shot-and-tortured-on-desperate-journeys-to-europe-doctor-reveals-10457130.html>

highlight that men and boys should be guaranteed the same access to reparations and services. Recent studies on sexual violence against men and boys suggest that they suffer from a non-recognition of sexual violence committed against them as, in fact, sexual violence⁵. This wrong needs to be corrected.

Mr. President,

The resolution the Council members have adopted today is a good start. We welcome in particular the gender inclusive language in the resolution but also believe that some paragraphs could have profited from further strengthening – for example with regard to the important role of Financial Action Task-Force and FATF-Style Regional Bodies. We look forward to a consistent political commitment from the Council and remain committed to our efforts to eradicate this human tragedy.

I thank you.

⁵ <https://www.ictj.org/news/sexual-violence-against-men-boys>