

**UNODC'S GLOBAL REPORT ON TRAFFICKING IN
PERSONS
New York, 4th February 2021**

Intervention by HE Mr Philippe Kridelka,
Permanent Representative of Belgium to the UN

Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear colleagues and friends,

More than ever, the fight against trafficking is a priority for Belgium. And our public opinion is appalled to read in UNODC's last global report that traffickers particularly target the **most vulnerable**, such as migrants, children, and people without jobs.

The COVID-19-induced recession and poverty is exposing more people to the risk of trafficking for the purpose of labour exploitation, whereby several workers are found trapped in a situation of exploitation, totally isolated due to the lockdown measures. For this reason the current Belgian government has decided that combating these crimes should be an absolute policy priority and that all specialized actors, among which labour inspectors, should get sufficient means to step up field visits and increase detection of potential victims.

Human trafficking is a global crime to which no country is immune, whether as a country of origin, transit, or destination. As it is by definition cross-border in nature, a multilateral approach is crucial. Belgium has long been at the forefront of the fight against trafficking, pioneering an integrated, holistic approach, based on a close international cooperation, as well as a concerted focus on protection of victims, prosecution of perpetrators and prevention through close partnerships between governments, civil society and the private sector.

We have seen the results of that cooperation in Thailand's fishing industry for instance. Thanks to the facts widely circulated by NGO's and the UN, the local authorities and the private sector have progressively taken measures in order to improve the workers' situation on the fishing boats. This was a moral

obligation, a legal one, but also an important condition to guarantee that export would remain possible to markets where well informed consumers want to buy products that respect, for instance, **ILO's fundamental labour standards**. In that regard, it is also noteworthy to underline that EU free-trade agreements include specific provisions to enforce such standards.

Survivors of Human trafficking are at the heart of our efforts, reducing them to mere victims would be a mistake. That is why Belgium contributed more than 2.2 million USD to the **UN Voluntary Trust Fund for Victims of Trafficking in Persons (UNVTF)**, which makes us the largest contributor. This fund is especially impactful by directly supporting actions by specialized NGOs around the world to ensure women, children and men exploited by human traffickers are identified and are provided with the necessary assistance, protection and support for their physical, psychological and social recovery and reintegration into their communities.

Here in New York, Belgium is active as well.

In 2017, we co-facilitated, together with Qatar, the intergovernmental negotiations for the **political declaration on the implementation of the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons**.

As an elected member of the UN Security Council for the term 2019-2020, Belgium has had a deliberate focus on conflict-related sexual violence. We consistently strived to address conflict-related trafficking in a more **comprehensive, human rights based and gender-sensitive approach**. We co-organized an Arria-Formula meeting to link the Women, Peace and Security agenda and the phenomenon of trafficking. We highlighted that UN peacekeeping and UN agencies personnel deployed in field missions should have the capacity to identify and report cases of trafficking in persons. Finally, as **Chair** of the Security Council **Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict**, we paid a particular attention to the issue of trafficking in its country specific conclusions, where it is treated as a form of sexual violence against children.

I thank you for your attention.