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Crime prevention and criminal justice

Improving the coordination of efforts against trafficking in persons

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report has been prepared pursuant to General Assembly resolution [74/176](#), entitled “Improving the coordination of efforts against trafficking in persons”, and contains a summary of the efforts of Member States and entities of the United Nations system towards its implementation. The report includes information on the status of adherence to the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, as well as on efforts made by all relevant stakeholders to enhance the implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution [64/293](#). The report also provides an update on the status and work of the United Nations voluntary trust fund for victims of trafficking in persons, especially women and children; information on the *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2020*, published by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime; an update on the work of the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons; and information on awareness-raising efforts, in particular, the designated World Day against Trafficking in Persons. The report also includes information on the impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic on global efforts against trafficking in persons.

* [A/76/50](#).



I. Introduction

1. The General Assembly, in 2019, adopted resolution [74/176](#) with a view to improving the coordination of efforts against trafficking in persons, thereby acknowledging that trafficking in persons remains a serious challenge to humanity that impairs people's enjoyment of human rights and threatens progress towards attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals.

2. The year 2020 marked the twentieth anniversary since the adoption by the General Assembly of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and two of its supplementary protocols, the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children and the Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air. In that context, most of the efforts detailed in the present report were implemented in a year of significance to the fight against trafficking in persons and ancillary offences.

3. In its resolution [74/176](#), entitled "Improving the coordination of efforts against trafficking in persons", the General Assembly called upon Member States to continue their efforts to criminalize trafficking in persons in all its forms, to condemn related criminal practices and to investigate, prosecute and penalize traffickers and intermediaries while providing victim-centred protection and assistance to the victims of trafficking with full respect for their human rights; reaffirmed the purposes of the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution [64/293](#), among which are to promote a human rights-based, gender- and age-sensitive approach in addressing all factors that make people vulnerable to trafficking in persons; called upon Member States to increase and support prevention efforts; and encouraged States to take measures to prevent, combat and eradicate trafficking in persons by strengthening capacities and international cooperation to investigate, prosecute and penalize trafficking in persons, discouraging demand that fosters exploitation leading to trafficking, and ending impunity of trafficking networks. The Assembly urged Member States and other stakeholders mentioned in the Global Plan of Action to continue to contribute to its full and effective implementation, including by means of strengthening cooperation and improving coordination among themselves in achieving that goal. The Assembly recognized the need for the Global Plan of Action as a means to, inter alia, promote coordinated and consistent measures to fight trafficking in persons in the four thematic focus areas of prevention of trafficking in persons, protection of and assistance to victims of trafficking in persons, prosecution of traffickers, and strengthening of partnerships to combat trafficking in persons. Under the Global Plan of Action, the Assembly established the United Nations voluntary trust fund for victims of trafficking in persons, especially women and children, to be managed by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC); tasked UNODC with reporting biennially on patterns and flows of trafficking in persons at the national, regional and international levels; and strengthened the role of the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons.

4. The General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit a report on the implementation of resolution [74/176](#) at its seventy-sixth session. The present report is based, inter alia, on information received from Member States and relevant stakeholders, including the member entities of the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons. The report covers the reporting period since the adoption of resolution [74/176](#), from 18 December 2019 to 8 July 2021.

II. Status of ratification of the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime

5. In its resolution 74/176, the General Assembly urged Member States that had not yet done so to consider ratifying or acceding to the Organized Crime Convention and its supplementary Trafficking in Persons Protocol. During the reporting period, three States acceded to the Protocol: Brunei Darussalam (30 March 2020), Comoros (23 June 2020) and Nepal (16 June 2020).¹ Now, more than 20 years since its adoption, the Protocol has 178 parties, and is rapidly progressing towards universal ratification.

6. Also in resolution 74/176, the General Assembly called upon Member States to continue their efforts to criminalize trafficking in persons in all its forms, and to investigate, prosecute and penalize traffickers and intermediaries. Of the 181 countries assessed in the Global Trafficking in Persons Report 2020, published by UNODC, 169 countries had adopted, by August 2020, dedicated legislation criminalizing trafficking in persons, in line with the Trafficking in Persons Protocol. The report noted that the number of people convicted globally, per 100,000 population, had nearly tripled since the Trafficking in Persons Protocol entered into force in 2003. Enacting specific legislation to criminalize trafficking in persons and investing in both national capacities and international cooperation contributed to the increase. Conviction rates were found to be higher in countries that had enacted legislation before 2003 compared to those with more recent legislation, although the latter had nevertheless recorded significant recent increases compared with past years, all of which suggests that global criminal justice responses are likely to continue to progress as countries obtain experience from the implementation of their respective frameworks.

III. Synthesis of efforts against trafficking in persons

A. Efforts by Member States

7. As at 9 June 2021, the following 48 Member States had submitted information in response to a request from UNODC, circulated in the form of a note verbale, for information on their efforts against trafficking in persons: Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, China, Denmark, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Finland, Germany, Guatemala, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Latvia, Lebanon, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Malta, Montenegro, Morocco, Myanmar, Netherlands, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Peru, Philippines, Qatar, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Serbia, Singapore, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, Uruguay, United States of America, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) and Zimbabwe.

8. Most States reported that they had developed and were implementing national strategic frameworks to counter trafficking in persons, with development processes being consultative, and interministerial committees or task forces in place to coordinate the implementation of national strategies. Several States clustered their interventions according to the four thematic areas outlined in resolution 64/293 on the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, namely, prevention of trafficking in persons, protection of and assistance to victims and witnesses, prosecution of trafficking in persons, and strengthening of partnerships against trafficking in persons. One State reported having added a fifth thematic focus, policy, to its strategic approach.

¹ Status of ratification as at 9 June 2021, available at <https://treaties.un.org>.

1. Prevention

9. In resolution [74/176](#), the General Assembly invited Member States to address the social, economic, cultural, political and other factors that make people vulnerable to trafficking in persons, and also called upon States, international organizations, civil society organizations and the private sector, through partnerships, to increase and support prevention efforts in countries of origin, transit and destination.

10. Most States reported that they had continued their awareness-raising efforts. In some cases, awareness-raising materials produced prior to 2019 had been distributed widely during the reporting period, suggesting that longer-term campaigns were being conducted. Some States reported that trafficking in persons had been mainstreamed into the curricula of elementary and secondary schools, as well as into curricula for teacher training.

11. Numerous countries also reported having utilized designated days, such as the World Day against Trafficking in Persons (30 July), established by the General Assembly in its resolution [68/192](#), the International Day against Sexual Exploitation and Trafficking of Women and Children (23 September) and the European Union Anti-Trafficking Day (18 October), to raise awareness of trafficking in persons and highlight the plight of victims. Such commemorations were made in partnership with international organizations and civil society organizations.

12. Prevention measures included the training of front-line personnel to enhance their capacity for the early detection and reporting of trafficking in persons, as well as the provision of social protection in the form of microcredit grants or allowances, especially in the wake of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. One State noted the establishment of a coordination mechanism to enhance the protection of children living and working on the streets from abuse, violence and potential exploitation.

13. Several States noted disruptions to their efforts to counter trafficking in persons, especially those relating to awareness-raising, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, as public health regulations had restricted mobility and had prohibited large gatherings. As a result, awareness-raising initiatives had been predominantly digital, with television, radio and social media used to broadcast the messages, while some countries also used billboards. Webinars had also been utilized for planned capacity-building work with anti-trafficking stakeholders, especially law enforcement authorities. Other States reported having utilized sporting events, film festivals and business exhibitions as platforms to disseminate messages about trafficking in persons. In one State, films had been screened throughout the country to raise awareness of trafficking of children for sexual exploitation.

14. Most of the countries mentioned capacity-building as a crucial prevention strategy and reported the organization of virtual training courses for stakeholders in the diplomatic service, the judiciary, the law enforcement sector, the hospitality industry, and the transport (civil aviation) and health-care sectors. One country mentioned having incorporated trafficking in persons into training for personnel being prepared for deployment in peacekeeping missions in Africa.

15. The recruitment of foreign labour was also noted as an area of preventive focus. Some States had signed bilateral agreements with countries of origin to, inter alia, facilitate transparency in supply chains, expose potential cases of exploitation, ensure that workers were well-informed of their rights and obligations, and facilitate the translation of standard employment contracts into the native languages of foreign workers. One country stopped the private recruitment of foreign workers in selected sectors of the economy (construction and agriculture) and only allowed such recruitment through channels established under bilateral agreements with countries of origin. Another State noted the production and wide dissemination of pamphlets on student and worker rights and on resources to inform visa application processes. Also noted was the establishment of public-private partnerships aimed at promoting the ethical supply of labour in, for example, the agriculture sector, resulting in

increased transparency in supply and demand, and reduced potential for exploitative labour practices. One country had established an online portal to screen job advertisements, as well as collaborations with the major social media companies to monitor advertisements and profile suspected traffickers.

16. Noting the importance of evidence-based preventive action, some countries reported having conducted assessments of trafficking in persons, especially in relation to the impact of COVID-19 on anti-trafficking responses, and having applied the findings of those assessments to policy interventions.

17. Some States reported having provided financial support for the implementation in selected foreign countries of programmes to support efforts ranging from awareness-raising to capacity development for front-line officers, especially those involved in the delivery of law enforcement and justice services. Such international assistance had either been administered through bilateral arrangements, or through non-governmental organizations directly involved in, inter alia, addressing the root causes of gender-based violence and boosting livelihoods at the grassroots level.

18. The establishment of and adherence to ethical procurement policies was also used to prevent trafficking in persons, in particular by ensuring transparency in supply chains, with one State noting the resulting safeguarding against the purchase of products and services emanating from exploited labour.

2. Protection of and assistance to victims

19. In resolution [74/176](#), the General Assembly called upon Member States to provide victim-centred protection and assistance to victims of trafficking, with full respect for their human rights.

20. The provision of social and protection services for trafficking victims was highlighted by several States as a key intervention. This included the provision of shelter, medical and psychosocial (counselling) support, and microcredit or financial grants (cash transfer programmes), and the regularization of the immigration status of victims through the issuance of temporary residence permits or humanitarian visas. Notable in most of the reported interventions was that support had been given to all identified victims, regardless of their nationality.

21. Some jurisdictions reported that they had legislation providing for the protection of trafficking victims, while others had amended their laws to provide for the restitution and compensation of victims and measures for the provision of financial assistance to trafficking victims. States also reported that they had enhanced their capacity to safeguard victims against institutional punishment for crimes committed as a direct consequence of being trafficked.

22. States reported the application of technology to identify and rescue trafficking victims, with one State having utilized new technologies to track missing children and technology involving deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) analysis to reunite them with their families. Furthermore, some States had intensified proactive investigations on online platforms, including through the use of artificial intelligence to identify both victims and perpetrators online. Engagement with students, software developers and socially responsible technology companies was also mentioned as key to developing ways in which technology and social media could be used to combat crime and enhance the effectiveness of anti-trafficking responses.

23. Most countries reported that victim assistance was provided in collaboration with non-governmental organizations. Those organizations were also key partners for governments in providing hotline services that led to the identification and rescue of victims entrapped in exploitative situations.

24. Additionally, some countries reported deliberate efforts to protect witnesses or informers in order to encourage the reporting of suspected trafficking cases.

3. Prosecution of trafficking in persons

25. In resolution 74/176, the General Assembly called upon Member States to criminalize trafficking in persons in all its forms, and to investigate, prosecute and penalize traffickers and intermediaries.

26. While the majority of responding States reported the existence of national legislation criminalizing trafficking in persons, several reported recent legislative amendments to, inter alia, align legal frameworks to the Trafficking in Persons Protocol, increase penalties for offences involving trafficking in persons, provide a framework for the protection of victims, and, in some countries, include specific provisions to ensure the non-punishment of victims for crimes committed as a direct consequence of their victimization in trafficking. Some Member States also reported having established victim- and witness-friendly support services for cases before the courts. One State reported having used its legislation on corporate responsibility to charge entities with trafficking offences.

27. In some cases, legislative amendments aimed at ensuring that the laws were in line with region-specific anti-trafficking frameworks, such as the European Parliament and Council of the European Union Directive 2011/36/EU on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims, the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, and the Association of Southeast Asian States (ASEAN) Convention against Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children.

28. Most of the countries highlighted the training of law enforcement and judicial officers as being key to national trafficking responses, especially training on effective investigation and prosecution practices.

29. Some States noted the specific consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic on their related responses, which included delays in court proceedings and impediments in access to justice.

4. Partnerships

30. In resolution 74/176, the General Assembly called upon Member States, international organizations, civil society organizations and the private sector, through partnerships, to increase and support prevention efforts in countries of origin, transit and destination. Additionally, the Assembly called on States to strengthen international cooperation, and cooperation with the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons.

31. Several States reported domestic cooperation with relevant stakeholders, usually within the framework of national multi-agency coordination mechanisms, largely involving government departments and civil society organizations, with a few countries noting the involvement of private sector actors. Multiple States reported having appointed national rapporteurs or ambassadors dedicated to the fight against trafficking in persons or dedicated national coordinators responsible for coordinating national interventions against trafficking in persons.

32. States reported that they had established bilateral cooperation arrangements with other States to counter transnational trafficking in persons in order to, inter alia, enhance mutual legal assistance in cases of trafficking in persons, conduct joint operations against trafficking in persons, share financial intelligence on traffickers and raise awareness to prevent trafficking in persons. Among the joint operations noted were Operation Odyssey in Europe; Operation Sentinel, addressing transnational criminal activities, including online child exploitation; and Operations Turquesa I, Turquesa II, White Sand and Weka, on the smuggling of migrants and trafficking in persons, with participating countries drawn from the Horn of Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia and Europe. Operations Turquesa II and Weka led to the rescue of approximately 600 potential victims of trafficking. UNODC provided assistance to the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) under those operations in relation to facilitating coordination between law

enforcement agents and prosecutors through the Ibero-American Network of Specialized Prosecutors against Trafficking in Persons and the Smuggling of Migrants and the Ibero-American Association of Public Prosecutors. Other successful operations conducted by INTERPOL member States included Operation Saraounia, on crimes against children and trafficking in persons in the Niger, and Operation Theseus in the Western Balkans.

33. States noted practical cooperation within regional coordination mechanisms, including the Network of Anti-Trafficking Coordinators of South-East Europe, the Task Force against Trafficking in Human Beings of the Council of the Baltic Sea States, the European Union Network of National Rapporteurs or Equivalent Mechanisms on Trafficking in Human Beings, the Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative against Trafficking and the Five Eyes Law Enforcement Group. Other intergovernmental mechanisms were also operating in the Americas, the ASEAN region, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) region and the Middle East and North Africa region.

34. Several other international networks were also noted, including the Working Group on Human Trafficking, established by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) Facilitation Panel in January 2020, and the International Survivors of Trafficking Advisory Council, which was established by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in 2021 in order to provide practical advice, guidance and recommendations grounded on the experiences of survivors to inform the work of OSCE. Numerous States pointed out that they had otherwise cooperated with international entities, in particular UNODC, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), INTERPOL, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), among others, in implementing specific interventions to counter trafficking in persons.

B. Efforts by United Nations entities and other international organizations

35. In addition to the information submitted by Member States for the present report, information was also submitted by several United Nations entities, namely, UNODC, ICAO, IOM, OHCHR, UN-Women, the Office of Rule of Law and Security Institutions of the Department of Peace Operations, the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and the Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). In addition, submissions were received from the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict.

36. Submissions were also received from the Council of Europe, ECOWAS, INTERPOL, OSCE, the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, the International Criminal Court, the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) and the Organization of American States (OAS).

1. Efforts in implementation of the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons

37. Further to the call in the Global Plan of Action for strengthened cooperation and improved coordination among stakeholders, organizations noted specific cooperation with national authorities and other stakeholders on responding to trafficking in persons to, inter alia, build expertise on networks involved in trafficking in persons, enhance investigations and prosecutions, strengthen policy, operations and research, establish shelters for trafficking victims, and develop and disseminate guidelines for the protection of, assistance to and referral of trafficking victims. Specific interventions included efforts to enhance the protection of children online in response to shifts, since the advent of COVID-19, in the modus operandi of traffickers

regarding online sexual exploitation of children. Related emerging practices and ongoing adaptations by front-line practitioners in response to those phenomena are detailed in a new study by UNODC entitled *The Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Trafficking in Persons and Responses to the Challenges: A Global Study of Emerging Evidence*, published on 8 July 2021.

38. The Global Plan of Action underlines the centrality of research and an evidence-base on trafficking in persons in understanding the nature and extent of the issue and the effectiveness of responses to it. During the period under review, several organizations released key knowledge resources on trafficking, as detailed below:

(a) In February 2021, UNODC published the *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2020*, in which it was observed that the share of trafficked children had increased exponentially to over 30 per cent of all detected victims of trafficking in persons, while the share of boys detected had also risen significantly in comparison to the share of girl victims. The report also highlighted an increase in the reporting of trafficking for purposes of organ removal. Globally, trafficking for sexual exploitation and for forced labour remained the major forms of exploitation, with 50 per cent of the detected victims being exploited sexually and 38 per cent exploited in forced labour;

(b) UNODC also published technical resources, including the following:

(i) The UNODC Model Legislative Provisions against Trafficking in Persons, and the *Legislative Guide for the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children*, to support countries in reviewing, revising and implementing national legislative frameworks;

(ii) *Female Victims of Trafficking for Sexual Exploitation as Defendants: A Case Law Analysis*, to support more consistent criminal justice action;

(iii) *Interlinkages between Trafficking in Persons and Marriage: Issue Paper*, to enhance related technical knowledge;

(iv) The *UNODC Toolkit for Mainstreaming Human Rights and Gender Equality into Criminal Justice Interventions to Address Trafficking in Persons and smuggling of Migrants*, providing practitioners with tools for better criminal justice responses;

(c) Members of the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons produced, either individually or collectively, a number of new knowledge resources within the framework of the Group. In December 2020, the Group published a joint analytical review of anti-trafficking efforts carried out in the 20 years since the adoption of the Trafficking in Persons Protocol, noting that, while significant global progress had been made, persistent challenges, including the disproportionate impact of trafficking in persons on women and girls, the lack of reliable data on the crime, and the low rate of conviction of perpetrators, continued to hamper an effective response to the crime.² As a result of the analytical review, the Group developed its first-ever joint plan of action, endorsed at the principal-level meeting held on 15 December 2020, identifying six key areas of action, including systematizing cooperation and multi-stakeholder partnerships in the delivery of comprehensive anti-trafficking programmes;

(d) The Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons also published issue briefs on trafficking in persons for the purpose of forced labour, and on the non-punishment of victims of trafficking. Furthermore, members of the Group provided a joint submission to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women informing the Committee's general recommendation No. 38 (2020) on trafficking in women and girls in the context of global migration ([CEDAW/C/GC/38](#)), which was subsequently adopted in December 2020;

² Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons, "20th anniversary of the Trafficking in Persons Protocol: an analytical review" (2020).

(e) Other activities of members of the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons included the following:

- (i) OSCE published a revision of the *Compendium of Relevant Reference Materials and Resources on Ethical Sourcing and Prevention of Trafficking in Human Beings for Labour Exploitation in Supply Chains*;
- (ii) ICMPD issued, inter alia, the publication entitled *Developing and Monitoring National Anti-Trafficking Response: A Practitioner's Guide*;
- (iii) ICAO issued, in collaboration with OHCHR, the publication entitled *Circular 357: Guidelines for Reporting Trafficking in Persons by Flight and Cabin Crew*, as well as an e-learning tool to enhance the capacity of aviation personnel to detect and promptly respond to trafficking in persons;
- (iv) In June 2020, INTERPOL published an analytical report on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the smuggling of migrants and trafficking in persons, noting the likely increase in persons at risk of such smuggling and trafficking and their risks of being deceived, exploited and trafficked;
- (v) The Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, published two key position papers, "The importance of implementing the non-punishment provision: the obligation to protect victims" and "The impact and consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic on trafficked and exploited persons";
- (vi) UN-Women and OSCE issued the publication entitled *Guidance Addressing Emerging Human Trafficking Trends and Consequences of the COVID-19 Pandemic*, in which they noted the interlinkages between pre-existing gender inequalities and COVID-19, which had resulted in an increasing trend of vulnerability, especially among women and girls, to trafficking in persons, which was likely to persist in the post-COVID-19 period.

2. Support to prevention efforts

39. Most of the United Nations entities and other international organizations reported having provided support to States to enhance their capacities to identify, disrupt and dismantle organized criminal groups; conduct joint operations; identify and rescue victims and arrest perpetrators; conduct research on trafficking in persons; and develop and/or amend relevant legislation. Several international organizations reported the holding of virtual workshops and seminars on trafficking in persons to circumvent the restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

40. The prevention of trafficking in persons in supply chains was an important area of focus for many of the international organizations. One of them reported having institutionalized new internal regulations prohibiting the acquisition of goods and services from any person or entity that might otherwise use practices incompatible with international laws and standards aimed at preventing child labour, sexual exploitation and trafficking in persons. IOM reported the continued promotion of human and labour rights of migrant workers in supply chains in Asia through the Corporate Responsibility in Eliminating Slavery and Trafficking (CREST) initiative, complemented by the CREST Fashion project, which seeks to strengthen the capacity of the fashion industry in the region to address the risks of labour exploitation, forced labour and trafficking in persons. In addition, the International Labour Organization (ILO) and IOM implemented the Ship to Shore Rights South-East Asia initiative to promote regular and safe labour migration and decent work for all migrants in the fishing industry.

41. The Procurement Network Task Force of the High-Level Committee on Management, co-chaired by ILO and OSCE, was currently seeking to develop a common approach to combat trafficking in persons in the supply chains of international organizations, while IOM had created the International Recruitment Integrity System to promote the ethical recruitment of migrant workers.

42. Several organizations reported the provision of support to intergovernmental coordination mechanisms for improving transnational cooperation on countering trafficking in persons. For example, several submissions referred to support provided to the Network of Anti-Trafficking Coordinators of South-Eastern Europe to enhance its response in South-Eastern Europe, while ECOWAS reported having facilitated the signing and implementation of a bilateral agreement between Mali and Nigeria in response to trafficking in persons.

3. Raising awareness of trafficking in persons

43. In resolution 74/176, the General Assembly invited all stakeholders to continue to observe the World Day against Trafficking in Persons in order to raise awareness of trafficking in persons and the situation of trafficking victims, and to promote and protect their rights.

44. International organizations made use of designated days to raise awareness of trafficking in persons, including the World Day against Trafficking in Persons, in line with General Assembly resolution 68/192. Many of them indicated, however, that COVID-19 health protocols across the world had resulted in either the postponement of planned commemorations in 2020, or the curtailing of planned activities in order to conform with health regulations in place, with many of the organizations instead resorting to the issuance of statements denouncing trafficking in persons.

45. The World Day against Trafficking in Persons in 2020 was commemorated under the theme “Committed to the cause: working on the front line to end human trafficking”. The theme was particularly pertinent to the COVID-19 pandemic, which had amplified the ongoing struggles encountered by first responders in supporting trafficking victims.

46. The Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons launched a global media campaign in 2020 to highlight the indispensable work of front-line officers in fighting trafficking in persons and supporting victims. In a statement delivered on the World Day against Trafficking in Persons, observed on 30 July 2020, the Group called on Governments and stakeholders to adequately resource and support front-line professionals, and to include survivor-led civil society organizations in the design and implementation of anti-trafficking policies and programmes.³

47. In addition, UNODC partnered with the Rukus Avenue Music Group to organize a virtual fundraising concert as part of the commemorations. The concert brought together notable musicians performing under the theme “Artists united against human trafficking”, and concert proceeds were donated to the United Nations voluntary trust fund for victims of trafficking in persons, especially women and children.

48. It is worth noting that most of the organizations did not limit their awareness-raising initiatives to the commemoration of designated days such as the World Day against Trafficking in Persons, but rather mainstreamed awareness-raising into their daily functions.

4. Strategic frameworks to counter trafficking in persons

49. During the reporting period, several intergovernmental and international organizations developed blueprints to guide their respective responses to trafficking in persons. UNODC launched its Strategy 2021–2025, identifying two thematic areas pertinent to countering trafficking in persons: “Preventing and countering organized crime” (thematic area 2) and “Crime prevention and criminal justice” (thematic area 5). The strategy emphasizes the leveraging of multi-stakeholder partnerships, including Governments, civil society organizations and the private sector, in the

³ Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons, joint statement on the World Day against Trafficking in Persons, 30 July 2020, available at https://icat.un.org/sites/default/files/publications/20200730_wdat_icat_joint_statement_2020_final.pdf.

response to trafficking in persons. UNODC also launched the Strategic Vision for Africa 2030 in February 2021 to complement the overall strategy.

50. Similarly, in 2021, the European Union adopted a new strategy on combating trafficking in human beings for the period 2021–2025, which acknowledges that, while significant progress has been made against trafficking in persons since 2011, when the European Union adopted its Directive 2011/36/EU on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims, the evolving nature of the crime requires a recasting of counter-trafficking approaches. Among other intervention areas, the European Union will seek to reduce the demand that fosters trafficking; break the criminal model to halt the exploitation of victims; protect, support and empower victims of trafficking; and advance international cooperation and partnerships. Implementation will also be interlinked with the new European Union strategy to tackle organized crime for the period 2021–2025, with both strategies emphasizing the serious nature of transnational organized crime and trafficking in persons.

51. In Africa, the African Union adopted its Ten-Year Action Plan on Eradication of Child Labour, Forced Labour, Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery in Africa (2020–2030), at the thirty-sixth ordinary session of the Executive Council, held in Addis Ababa from 6 to 7 February 2020. The Action Plan, which is aligned to the African Union Agenda 2063 and target 8.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals, reinforces the need for cooperation and coordination on cross-border issues, and recognizes the capacity of regional economic communities in fronting cooperation efforts across the continent in countering trafficking in persons and other transnational organized crimes. It builds upon the Ouagadougou Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings, Especially Women and Children, of 2006.

52. During the same period, ECOWAS adopted three relevant instruments, namely, the Child Policy and Strategic Plan of Action (2019–2030); the “Roadmap on prevention and response to child marriage (2019–2030)” and the Political Declaration and Common Position against Child Marriage. Meanwhile, the Council of Europe issued its “Roadmap on strengthening action against trafficking in human beings for the purpose of labour exploitation.

C. Inter-agency coordination mechanisms

1. Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons

53. The Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons is a policy forum that was formally recognized in 2007 pursuant to General Assembly resolution [61/180](#), in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to improve upon the fledgling inter-agency coordination group on trafficking in persons in order to enhance cooperation and coordination and facilitate a holistic and comprehensive approach to trafficking in persons.

54. In 2020, OAS and the Council of the Baltic Sea States became the newest members of the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons, while in 2021, the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and consequences, joined the Group as a partner. The 28-member Group leverages on the diverse expertise and comparative advantage of its members in addressing trafficking in persons. The Group is coordinated by UNODC and is currently co-chaired by UNODC and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). UN-Women and OSCE co-chaired the Group in 2020.

55. The work of the Coordination Group continued to cover a broad range of activities aimed at coordinating and advancing efforts to counter trafficking in persons. The second meeting of the Group at the level of principals of the relevant international and regional organizations and agencies, held on 15 December 2020, provided strategic leadership to the coordination mechanism, and renewed a strong

determination to pursue joint efforts to address critical issues related to trafficking in persons and contribute to key policy developments with one united voice.⁴ The meeting also brought to a close the extensive inter-agency consultations carried out throughout 2020, with the endorsement by the Group of the aforementioned analytical review of anti-trafficking efforts since the adoption of the Trafficking in Persons Protocol in 2000, as well as its plan of action. A third meeting of the Group at the level of principals is planned for the end of 2021.

56. In October 2020, the Coordination Group hosted a virtual side event on the margins of the tenth session of the Conference of Parties to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, which focused on the non-punishment of victims of trafficking and was attended by over 100 participants.

57. The Coordination Group continued to promote and disseminate its *Toolkit for Guidance in Designing and Evaluating Counter-Trafficking Programmes* of 2016, which is aimed at strengthening the design of anti-trafficking programmes, informing planning for evaluation, and engendering foundational and advanced learning across the global anti-trafficking sector. During the reporting period, UNODC, IOM and ICMPD used the toolkit to programme their activities, guide the review of programme design, and/or to develop guidelines for building and monitoring national anti-trafficking responses.

58. The Inter-Agency Coordination Group platform continued to demonstrate the significance of sustained cooperation and coordination in the fight against trafficking in persons. As concluded in the Group's analytical review, fostering cooperation and dialogue among States, national coordination mechanisms, law enforcement authorities, civil society, survivors of trafficking, international organizations working on the ground, the media and the private sector is a prerequisite to any viable anti-trafficking programme and response.⁵ In its plan of action, the Group recognized the importance of reinforcing existing cooperation with relevant inter-agency mechanisms, including Alliance 8.7, the OSCE-led Expert Coordination Team of the Alliance against Trafficking in Persons, the United Nations Network on Migration and the Task Team on Anti-Trafficking of the Global Protection Cluster.

2. Alliance 8.7

59. The mandate of Alliance 8.7 is drawn from target 8.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals, which calls for States to take immediate action and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking by 2030 and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms. The Alliance is guided by its Global Coordinating Group, whose membership is determined on a rotational basis, covering key stakeholder groups and geographical regions, with the objective of reviewing progress and providing strategic guidance to the Alliance. In the framework of the Alliance's Sustainable Development Goals Monitoring Working Group, pathfinder countries have been supported in their efforts to report on progress in achieving target 8.7 through an online reporting framework and indicators. ILO continues to serve as the secretariat to the Alliance.

3. Task Team on Anti-Trafficking of the Global Protection Cluster

60. The Global Protection Cluster is a network of non-governmental organizations, international organizations and United Nations entities engaged in protection work in humanitarian crises, including, inter alia, situations of armed conflict and natural disasters. Its Task Team on Anti-Trafficking aims to develop guidance and build capacity on trafficking in persons in humanitarian situations, develop an anti-trafficking advocacy strategy and cultivate a more inclusive and diverse community

⁴ Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons, "2020 Chairs' annual report" (2020).

⁵ Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons, "20th anniversary of the Trafficking in Persons Protocol".

of anti-trafficking practitioners to share experiences and effective practices. In 2020, the Task Team finalized the publication entitled *An Introductory Guide to Anti-Trafficking Action in Internal Displacement Contexts*, aimed at informing the development of capacity-building work on trafficking in persons for United Nations front-line responders in humanitarian settings. At the time of drafting the present report, the Global Protection Cluster was in the process of rolling out the guide through dedicated training sessions.. The information in the guide is aimed at supporting the detection, identification, referral and protection of, and provision of assistance to, trafficked persons who may be internally displaced persons, and providing guidance on both the prevention of trafficking and the relevant actors to partner with in anti-trafficking efforts. The Global Protection Cluster is currently coordinated by UNHCR.

D. Multilateral engagement

61. During the reporting period, the Conference of the Parties to the Organized Crime Convention, at its tenth session, held in October 2020, adopted resolution 10/1, in which it launched the review process of the Mechanism for the Review of the Implementation of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocols thereto, which include the Trafficking in Persons Protocol. The Implementation Review Mechanism allows for States parties to the Organized Crime Convention and its supplementary Protocols to peer review the implementation by States of those instruments. In addition, the Conference adopted resolution 10/3, on the effective implementation of the Trafficking in Persons Protocol. In that resolution, the Conference, inter alia, encouraged Member States to establish or strengthen multidisciplinary cooperation and coordination at the national, regional and international levels among competent authorities, law enforcement agencies and other relevant agencies involved in combating trafficking in persons. This includes international cooperation on the investigation and prosecution of cases of trafficking in persons, and on the use of mutual legal assistance, as well as law enforcement cooperation and joint investigations.

62. In March 2021, the Fourteenth United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice adopted the Kyoto Declaration on Advancing Crime Prevention, Criminal Justice and the Rule of Law: Towards the Achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In the Kyoto Declaration, Member States committed to, inter alia, protecting the rights of children and youth; addressing new, emerging and evolving forms of crime; examining trends and the evolution of methods employed in the conduct of crime; strengthening efforts to prevent, counter and combat trafficking in persons; and taking more effective measures to prevent and end abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children. Member States also undertook to enhance multidisciplinary efforts to prevent and combat crime through cooperation and coordination between various stakeholders, including by fostering multi-stakeholder partnerships with non-State actors.⁶

63. In addition, at its thirtieth session, in May 2021, the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice recommended to the Economic and Social Council the adoption of a draft resolution on the implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, further to the adoption by the Council of a similar resolution, resolution 2017/18, in 2017. In the draft resolution, States were encouraged to promote partnerships and the engagement of the business community and civil society in developing and implementing sustainable initiatives to prevent and combat trafficking in persons in supply chains.

⁶ A/CONF.234/16, chap. I, resolution 1.

E. Impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic on efforts against trafficking in persons

64. While many of the responses from States and international organizations noted the implementation of relevant initiatives and activities during the period under review, several submissions underlined the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on anti-trafficking efforts.

65. The impact of COVID-19 continues to grow and has clearly worsened social ills in many societies.⁷ Like any other major health or economic crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic has generated opportunities for exploitation, as people have become increasingly vulnerable owing to loss of employment and income, and have become desperate to adapt to changes through either migration or the incurring of debt. As a result of the pandemic, those who are the most marginalized, discriminated against and impoverished have suffered the greatest increase in the risk of exploitation.⁸ The pandemic has resulted in the diversion of vital resources and capacities, including a reduction in funds available for victim support services. Among those whose vulnerabilities have worsened are children, who have been further exposed to forms of exploitation such as sexual exploitation.⁹ Although the pandemic has amplified existing inequalities, recovery efforts have offered a unique opportunity for States and other stakeholders to address deeply entrenched inequalities and both recurrent and emerging challenges such as gender discrimination, poverty and unemployment, which increase people's vulnerability to trafficking in persons.¹⁰

66. In May 2020, UNODC published a report highlighting how the pandemic has exposed victims of trafficking to further exploitation while measures to curb the spread of the coronavirus have limited their access to essential services. The report warns that traffickers will increasingly take advantage of the economic downturn created by the pandemic and find increased opportunities for online exploitation. Research in follow up to the report has detailed how front-line responders have subsequently adapted and developed practices to continue identifying victims, investigating and prosecuting traffickers and providing access to support services.

67. A joint statement issued by the Expert Coordination Team of the Alliance against Trafficking in Persons in December 2020 called for States to support civil society organizations providing necessary support to victims and survivors of trafficking, noting that the pandemic had widened the pool of at-risk people who were vulnerable to trafficking in persons. It also acknowledged that some of the measures taken to counter the spread of COVID-19, such as national lockdowns, had exposed the gaps in established mechanisms for the coordination of anti-trafficking efforts and the exchange of related information.¹¹

68. Apart from increased vulnerabilities, the pandemic has also resulted in traffickers adjusting their *modi operandi* to adapt to the new realities, including by intensifying their control and isolation of, and violence against, trafficking victims,¹² and in subtle shifts in some forms of exploitation, such as an increase in commercial

⁷ Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, *Socio-Economic Impacts of the Covid-19 Pandemic: Evidence from COMESA Region — Final Report* (November 2020).

⁸ James Cockayne, *Developing Freedom: The Sustainable Development Case for Ending Modern Slavery, Forced Labour and Human Trafficking* (New York, United Nations University, 2021).

⁹ Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, "COVID-19 position paper on the impact and consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic on trafficked and exploited persons" (June 2020).

¹⁰ UNODC, "Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on trafficking in persons: preliminary findings and messaging based on stocktaking" (Vienna, 2020).

¹¹ Expert Coordination Team of the Alliance against Trafficking in Persons, "Statement on support to anti-trafficking civil society organizations during the COVID-19 pandemic" (Vienna, Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), 2020).

¹² Ibid.

online sexual exploitation, especially of women and children,¹³ and has had a negative impact on the functions of national referral mechanisms or equivalent systems.¹⁴

69. In view of the significant challenges posed to the criminal justice system by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, at its thirtieth session, in May 2021, recommended to the Economic and Social Council the approval of a draft resolution for adoption by the General Assembly entitled “Strengthening criminal justice systems during and after the COVID-19 pandemic”, in which the Assembly would underline that the pandemic requires comprehensive, integrated, multisectoral and coordinated responses, including through cooperation between the justice and health sectors.

IV. Understanding and overcoming recurrent and emerging challenges

70. Although a global framework to respond to trafficking in persons has now been in existence for more than 20 years, and has been complemented by regional and national frameworks, the commission of the crime has not abated. The needed assessment of existing interventions put in place to counter trafficking in persons will be supported by the forthcoming third appraisal of the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons and by the implementation of the Mechanism for the Review of the Implementation of the Organized Crime Convention and the Protocols thereto.

71. While it is widely acknowledged that inadequate coordination between government departments, weak engagement with non-State actors, including the private sector, and gaps in data on the crime of trafficking in persons are some of the reasons why the crime continues to be committed,¹⁵ there are other enduring challenges that hamper an effective response to the phenomenon. These include the gender dimension affecting the vulnerability and exploitation of mainly women and girls; the persistent gap regarding reliable data on trafficking in persons; the low level of identification, prosecution and conviction of cases of trafficking in persons; and emerging challenges such as the revictimization of victims of trafficking and the misuse of technology by traffickers.

72. Although technology is acknowledged as a very useful tool for countering trafficking in persons, emerging dimensions relating to technology include the extensive use of the Internet and social media by traffickers to recruit and exploit their victims and the deployment of new technologies at various stages of the trafficking chain.¹⁶ In addition to a notable rise in online sexual exploitation of women and children, several steps in the process of trafficking in human beings, such as the recruitment of victims and the advertisement of services, have moved almost entirely to the online domain.¹⁷

¹³ Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, “COVID-19 position paper”.

¹⁴ Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and OSCE, Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, *Guidance Addressing Emerging Human Trafficking Trends and Consequences of the COVID-19 Pandemic* (2020).

¹⁵ African Union, Ten-Year Action Plan on Eradication of Child Labour, Forced Labour, Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery in Africa (2020–2030): Agenda 2063-SDG Target 8.7, revised draft v.5.

¹⁶ European Commission, “Third report on progress made in the fight against trafficking in human beings (2020) as required under article 20 of Directive 2011/36/EU on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims” (Brussels, 2020).

¹⁷ European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (Europol) and European Union Serious and Organised Crime Threat Assessment, *A Corrupting Influence: The Infiltration and Undermining of Europe’s Economy and Society by Organised Crime* (Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2021).

V. Update on the United Nations voluntary trust fund for victims of trafficking in persons, especially women and children

73. The United Nations voluntary trust fund for victims of trafficking in persons, especially women and children, was established by the General Assembly in its resolution 64/293, on the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, with the aim of providing humanitarian, legal and financial aid to victims of trafficking through established channels of assistance, such as governmental, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations. The trust fund emphasizes a victim-centred approach aligned to the thematic areas of prevention, prosecution and protection outlined in the Global Plan of Action. It is managed by UNODC.

74. Its mandate emphasizes direct victim assistance as an integral component of the global effort to address trafficking in persons. The trust fund supports the implementation and delivery of activities and services that enhance the psychological recovery and social reintegration of victims of trafficking and empower survivors to claim their rights. These efforts include support for the identification of victims, legal and administrative assistance, and coordination and information-sharing. Each year, more than 3,500 victims are directly assisted through the trust fund's partners.

75. The year 2020 marked the tenth anniversary of the trust fund's existence. Since its inception, the trust fund has launched five global calls for funding proposals. Under its fourth call for proposals, in 2019, the trust fund awarded grants to a record 32 projects implemented by non-governmental organizations across 24 countries. In total, more than 90 specialized projects undertaken by non-governmental organizations in more than 50 countries have been selected, with a total of \$4.8 million in grants awarded to provide direct assistance to victims. As a direct consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic and its negative economic impacts, the trust fund experienced a much higher demand for grants under the fourth and fifth calls for proposals compared with previous calls; in 2020, a record number of proposals were received, from 268 non-governmental organizations across 64 countries, increasing to approximately 500 proposals from 88 countries in the first half of 2021. The trust fund received \$790,000 in voluntary contributions in 2020, which was below the annual funding target of \$1.5 million needed to ensure its sustainable and effective functioning. The priority of the fifth call for proposals, launched on 1 December 2020, focused on projects providing direct assistance to victims arising from armed conflict, and to large movements of refugees or migrants or those fleeing instability caused by a breakdown of law and order. In addition, the trust fund launched subprogramme 2 of its fifth call for proposals, aimed at providing grants for medium-term direct assistance to vulnerable victims of trafficking in persons.

76. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the trust fund streamlined the grant application and approval process in 2020 to permit up to three calls for proposals per year to meet increased demand. However, this effort has continued to be hampered by the slow pace of efforts to replenish the trust fund to meet the demand and reach more victims through practical measures undertaken by civil society actors. Furthermore, in 2020, the trust fund conducted an impact survey on survivors of trafficking and mitigation by non-governmental organizations amid the COVID-19 pandemic. As part of its risk assessment and contingency plan, the trust fund will continue to work closely with non-governmental organization grantees to collect country-specific information with a view to minimizing the risks and impact of COVID-19 on project implementation.

77. As at April 2021, the trust fund had received, since its inception, a cumulative total of \$7.9 million in contributions from a wide range of supporters, including 32 Member States, 34 private sector organizations and several individual donors.

78. Regarding its governance structure, the trust fund's new Board of Trustees, as elected in 2020 for the 2020–2022 term, is composed of Dame Julie Okah-Donli

(Chair), Viktoria Avakova, Maria Susana Ople, Inge Vervotte and Alexis Bethancourt Yau.

VI. Towards a third appraisal of the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons

79. The Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons was adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution [64/293](#) with the aim of, inter alia, promoting the universal ratification and further implementation of the global framework to address trafficking in persons, which includes the Organized Crime Convention and its supplementary Trafficking in Persons Protocol; helping Member States to reinforce their political commitments and legal obligations to prevent and combat trafficking in persons; and promoting comprehensive, coordinated and consistent responses to counter trafficking in persons. The Global Plan of Action also seeks to promote a human rights-based and gender- and age-sensitive approach in addressing all factors that make people vulnerable to trafficking in persons and to strengthen the criminal justice response, all of which are necessary to prevent trafficking in persons, protect its victims and prosecute its perpetrators. In addition to raising awareness within the United Nations system, as well as among States and other stakeholders, the Global Plan of Action is aimed at fostering cooperation and coordination among all relevant stakeholders, including Member States, international organizations, civil society and the private sector, taking into account existing best practices and lessons learned.

80. The General Assembly, in its resolution [68/192](#), decided to appraise the progress achieved in the implementation of the Global Plan of Action at four-year intervals; the first such appraisal had been undertaken in 2013. In that context, 2021 presents a third opportunity to appraise the progress achieved, through a high-level meeting of the General Assembly to be held in November 2021, and presents a unique opportunity for Member States to forge a unified response to trafficking in persons.

VII. Recommendations

81. It is recommended that Member States and other relevant stakeholders, as appropriate, prioritize the following measures:

(a) Member States and all relevant stakeholders, public and private, should increase their efforts to comprehensively implement the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, and the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons;

(b) Member States should support and fully participate in the third appraisal of the Global Plan of Action;

(c) States parties should engage in the implementation of the Mechanism for the Review of the Implementation of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocols thereto;

(d) Member States should scale up efforts to safeguard human rights by, inter alia, engaging civil society and the private sector in efforts to counter trafficking in persons, including by facilitating ethical recruitment, sustainable employment and transparency in public procurement and global supply chains;

(e) Member States should establish dedicated and specialized agencies to prevent and combat trafficking in persons, in order to facilitate dialogue among experts in different areas, such as law enforcement and social services, and promote coordinated responses;

(f) Member States should involve community groups in national interventions on trafficking in persons to ensure the sustainability of such

interventions, and more holistically address enduring challenges, such as gender-based discrimination and poverty, that drive mainly women and children into positions of vulnerability;

(g) Member States, in collaboration with relevant stakeholders, should utilize existing tools and innovate as necessary in order to measure, monitor and evaluate the implementation of their respective action plans, strategies and initiatives to counter trafficking in persons;

(h) Member States and relevant stakeholders should conduct research on new and emerging issues that have a bearing on the response to trafficking in persons, such as the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), humanitarian settings and the misuse of technology, to inform concrete actions in response to trafficking in persons;

(i) The Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons should reinforce and build on its existing cooperation with relevant expert entities and mechanisms, in particular at the regional level;

(j) Member States should enhance regional and international cooperation through, inter alia, joint operations, intelligence sharing and the exchange of expertise between countries of origin, transit and destination;

(k) All stakeholders should consider sharing information and experiences relating to effective practices to counter trafficking in persons, covering all four thematic areas of the comprehensive response to trafficking in persons, as outlined in the Global Plan of Action.
