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Remarks

By

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On behalf of the Government of Uganda and on my own behalf, I take this opportunity to convey greetings from the Republic of Uganda and to thank you for the invitation for our participation and indeed the opportunity for us to present and share our experiences on human trafficking and smuggling at this auspicious occasion.

As you may note, human trafficking and smuggling are at the center of the global migration agenda given the rapid growth rate of the crimes, the gravity of consequences for victims and the daunting but not insurmountable challenges for law enforcement. Without doubt, human trafficking and smuggling at both the global and national level are competing for the uppermost position on the continuum of transnational organized crimes.

Generally, human trafficking involves the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons by means of force, threat of force, coercion, abduction, deception or abuse of positions of power or vulnerability for purposes of exploiting the victims. On the other hand, human or people smuggling is understood as 'the facilitation, transportation, attempted transportation or illegal entry of a person or persons across an international border in violation of the laws of one or more countries either clandestinely or through deception, such as the use of fraudulent documents'.

The difference between human trafficking and people smuggling is that whilst in the former, consent of the victim is achieved through means of deception or control, in the latter, the person being smuggled is a partner in the crime being committed against one state or more. Each of these crimes is complex, calling for elaborate mechanisms for combating the crimes.

On its part, human trafficking is a multibillion dollar worldwide illegal industry thriving on the economic or social vulnerability, ignorance, gullibility and sometimes adventurousness of unsuspecting persons, especially youth, children and women. In Uganda, the most affected category is that of the youth and women who are trafficked from Uganda under the guise of better employment, business and education opportunities abroad. This situation is not peculiar to Uganda alone. Almost every country, every region, every continent is under threat. The sheer vigor and order with which this crime is organized by perpetrators throws daunting but not insurmountable demands for effective responses from actors within and outside governments.

Syndicates behind the transnational dimension of human trafficking devote enormous resources towards the success of their operations because the profits from it are indeed enormous. It has been reported by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime that profits from labour trafficking alone have reached the tune of USD 31 billion. The shocking truth is that the combination of profit from labour trafficking, sex trafficking and other dimensions of

human trafficking at a global rate is competing neck-to-neck with, if not more favorably than, the world coffee trade.

What is even more distressing is that while syndicates have such illegal resources at their disposal, governments the world over are struggling to maintain hardly adequate budgets for the many competing needs of their economies including fighting transnational crimes such as human trafficking.

Whereas the crime is sophisticated, we also know that it can be tackled through proactive countering mechanisms at the international, regional and national level. These proactive initiatives must however be supported by effective coordination of responses by all actors involved in the fight.

First and foremost, all governments, and especially those from within the INTERPOL fraternity, should of necessity and urgency legislate for or strengthen legislative action for the prevention, suppression and punishment of the crime. This legislative response begins with the signing, ratification and domestication of international conventions and protocols against human trafficking and most especially the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Palermo Protocols against human trafficking. It is extremely difficult to combat the crime when some countries do not recognize it as a crime. Our experiences have taught us that it is difficult to have any meaningful collaboration with countries that have no legal frameworks for supporting initiatives against human trafficking.

I also wish to state that Uganda is a party to the above international conventions and protocols and has gone ahead to domesticate the instruments through the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act No. 7 of 2009. Our law espouses legislative action in support of prevention, protection, punishment and partnerships for combating human trafficking. At the moment, we are undertaking a law reform exercise geared at coordinating a legal response by existing legal frameworks to provide support to our anti-trafficking law. We hope we can inspire similar action from partners, especially within the region.

Secondly, legislation of itself is hopeless if it is not followed up by effective implementation strategies through national action plans which should be linked to the causes of human trafficking and which should be implemented to the letter. Such action plans and strategies are critical in assessing impact of the national and transnational fight against the crime. Uganda is developing its national action plan from a multi-sectoral perspective for coordinated responses within and outside government.

Thirdly, effective international cooperation and information sharing is critical for the cause before us. Timely information sharing at the international level is important for the interception of perpetrators and rescue of victims outside national jurisdictions. Meaningful international cooperation and collaboration should translate into effective support for international or cross-

border investigations in support of prosecution efforts at the national level, extradition pacts between countries for the return/extradition of wanted perpetrators, or Memoranda of Understanding for the rescue and repatriation of victims. The evidence of such cooperation and collaboration will be provided by the existence of sustainable and well-integrated national and transnational referral systems and mechanisms.

My government has put up a national multi-sectoral task force for the coordination of government responses against human trafficking, and we are working with stakeholders in the region to spur regional initiatives that mirror national and international commitments in this cause. By March next year, we will have a fully integrated national referral mechanism and we hope it can feed into similar regional and international efforts.

Fourth, international cooperation and collaboration against human trafficking should seek to sponsor joint law enforcement operations such as the recently concluded Operation Hope conducted in September 2012 by East African countries under the auspices of the INTERPOL Regional Bureau in Nairobi. Such operations enable the joint and coordinated identification of transnational or cross-border syndicates and lead to the sharing of experiences for the effective destruction of these syndicates or cartels.

Fifth, devotion of resources towards capacity building for law enforcement is equally critical. It must however not rotate only within one agency at the national or international level but should be multi-sectoral, considering that the vice is perpetrated from various platforms and requires cross-cutting approaches.

Hence capacity building focusing on perpetrator and victim identification should seek to link the various law enforcement responses ranging from border controls, national and transnational investigations, information sharing, community participation and initiatives for the punishment of perpetrators and protection of victims.

Sixth, public or community participation should be harnessed for the prevention of human trafficking through effective community policing strategies. To this end, governments and the international community must therefore be ready to invest in public awareness campaigns and strategies including the public communication of convicted criminals and corresponding punishments given. In many ways this is a cost-effective prevention strategy and leads to public support for investment in initiatives against the vice. Citizens, residents, media and civil society should be empowered to contribute to fighting the vice rather than fighting law enforcement.

Investment in ICT to support efforts such as investigations, prosecution, border controls, information sharing, data management and coordination of databases on human traffickers and victims is key. ICT will also facilitate data capture for reliable statistics in support of better or improved planning, policy response and crime management against both human trafficking and people smuggling.

Allow me to state that the strategies needed for human trafficking will work equally well for people smuggling, though effective border controls are given emphasis in the latter.

I hasten to add that all the above strategies are rendered meaningless if political support and resources are withheld or not given for required responses. It is therefore imperative that the international community begins to prioritize the initiatives which can be supported with substantial and appropriate investment.

With these and many other commitments not herein mentioned, I believe we will be able to provide the required effective responses at the international and national levels.

Once again, I thank you for the opportunity to share with you the contents of this paper and hope your own discussions will enrich our commitments at national level.

Thank you all.