



10th Session of the Conference of Parties to
The United Nations Convention Against Transnational Crime
Vienna 12 -16 October 2020
Agenda item (2b)

TITLE: TOWARDS ENDING HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN THE MIDST OF A GLOBAL PANDEMIC

Mr. / Madam Chair,

Thank you for the opportunity to address you. I am speaking on behalf of our organization, the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary – Loreto Generalate and the following organizations - Company of the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul, Sisters of Charity Federation, VIVAT International, Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, UNANIMA International, Salesian Missions, serving in more than 150 countries, and with the endorsement of the Permanent Observer Mission of the Sovereign Order of Malta.

We welcome the Review Mechanism, appreciate the hard work involved to get to this point, and trust that it will contribute significantly to effective implementation of the Convention and Protocols.

We look forward to collaborating with our governments and to participating in the constructive dialogues, which will be part of the Review process. In this vein, we echo the civil society declaration for the 75th Anniversary of the United Nations in that “We commit to the continued and robust engagement of diverse stakeholders to find solutions to the most pressing global problems” of our time.

The COVID –19 crisis has exacerbated the situation by reducing millions into poverty and desperation and therefore, more vulnerable to becoming victims of trafficking. We see the implications of the crisis all around us as we work with vulnerable people whose human dignity and rights must be respected and preserved. We urge parties to the Protocol to hold themselves responsible for monitoring its implementation during this international crisis. Likewise, we call on YOU to choose ways to engage with NGO’s and other stakeholders in providing strategic direction for the anti-human trafficking work. It is about people, the most vulnerable women, children and men.

The exponential increase in online methods used for exploitation and trafficking of children is a matter for serious concern. In addition, as a result of COVID 19 crisis, time spent online by young girls, at home and isolated from school, has opened them to grooming by sexual predators and trafficking. A Europol report on cybercrime during the pandemic indicated an increase in offenders attempting to contact children and in online sharing of images of child exploitation. Like many civil society groups, we find ourselves overwhelmed by the lack of safeguards to protect children against this form of exploitation.

In his address to the General Assembly on September 25th, His Holiness, Pope Francis reminded Member States of the great numbers of people, being forced to leave their homes, many of whom become victims of human trafficking, sexual slavery or forced labor, exploited in degrading jobs and denied a just wage. "This is intolerable", he states, "yet intentionally ignored by many!"

"Intentionally ignored by many." It is a whole of society issue, a global lack of interest exacerbated by corruption at all levels of society, including lack of regulation, accountability and transparency by large corporations and the banking system facilitating laundering of the proceeds and transfer of funds from online child sexual exploitation. The Convention clearly promotes intolerance of this activity.

Finally, we would like to highlight the need for increased awareness raising, cooperation, and appropriate training to address this burning crime.

Thank you.