

## STATEMENT OF THE INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT LAW ORGANIZATION

### HIGH-LEVEL MEETING ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GLOBAL PLAN OF ACTION TO COMBAT TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS

United Nations  
October 2, 2017  
New York

*Judit Arenas, Deputy Permanent Observer to the United Nations / Director- External Relations*

Check against delivery

Excellency,

The International Development Law Organization (IDLO) welcomes this High-Level Meeting as well as the adoption of the Political Declaration on the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons.

As the only intergovernmental organization with an exclusive mandate to advance the rule of law and access to justice globally in the pursuit of sustainable development, our work is firmly focused on combatting the underlying factors that make people vulnerable to trafficking such as inequality, gender discrimination, social exclusion and marginalization. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, particularly Goal 16, provides us with a roadmap to build a world in which the conditions that often breed trafficking may be eradicated. Let us all work together to make it a reality.

Trafficking in persons is a heinous crime and antithetical to the rule of law. Trafficking is also a criminal act. Although it is outlawed by several international treaties and conventions, and governments have made progress in passing relevant national legislation, much remains to be done to strengthen the legal frameworks to ensure that the tools exist to pursue criminal charges. As part of our contribution towards the dimension of **preventing** trafficking, IDLO has provided technical assistance to review and improve national legislation in line with international standards, to create national anti-trafficking strategies, as well as supporting their implementation.

Mr. President,

Ending the scourge of human trafficking is everyone's business. It requires all institutions to work together. It requires all sectors of society, including the private sector and the media, to engage and take urgent action to prevent it.

Initiatives that raise awareness of trafficking in persons across different groups including the police, vulnerable communities, housing associations and the media can make a difference. In Ukraine, IDLO has supported the establishment of a coordination mechanism to ensure

prevention and identification of suspected trafficking cases through a “neighbourhood watch” approach. It also facilitates information exchange between housing associations and the police.

Sadly, extensive work to implement prevention strategies has not proven sufficient: governments must unequivocally take all necessary steps to **prosecute** those involved in the crime of trafficking.

A strong, independent judiciary together with properly trained police, prosecutors and border officials, backed by laws and regulations in line with international obligations, mean that well-established institutions will be able to bring those guilty of trafficking to justice. Developing the capacity of legal and justice systems is critical for us to be able to effectively tackle trafficking in persons. As the Declaration and the Global Plan of Action note, enhancing the capacity of law enforcement and criminal justice systems to identify, investigate and prosecute cases of trafficking in persons is an important component of the response to tackle this problem.

However, institutions alone are not enough. People must be made aware of their rights so that they are able to claim them. That is why, alongside its capacity development programs, IDLO also promotes legal empowerment strategies and seeks to ensure women, poor people, migrants and other marginalized groups can access legal services, including legal aid. These are key ingredients for both prevention and protection.

Human trafficking continues to exploit millions of victims, most them women and girls. We need to take a gender-centered approach to the interventions to tackle trafficking. IDLO stands ready, through its programs, to create the necessary legal support structures that will allow women and girls to come forward.

Furthermore, any discussion on women and girl survivors of trafficking must take into account the inequality and vulnerability that are often at the root of this problem. We cannot effectively **protect** women and girls from trafficking if we are not ready to combat gender discrimination globally and if we are not willing to work to shatter the power structures that perpetuate this global challenge.

Ultimately, trafficking is a business that deals in human suffering. Any response must put the victims and survivors first and ensure that legal and administrative systems do not criminalize them. We must ensure their access to justice.

Mr. President,

In pursuing our new Strategic Plan, framed around advancing the objectives of SDG 16, IDLO reaffirms its deep commitment to combat trafficking in persons and to support the implementation of the Global Plan of Action. IDLO would also like to state its commitment to

participate in and support the efforts of the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons where we can bring added value.

Ending human trafficking is about restoring the lives of people. This is a cross-border global problem that requires global action. Let us all unite to work to end it.

I thank you for your kind attention.

*The International Development Law Organization (IDLO) enables governments and empowers people to reform laws and strengthen institutions to promote peace, justice, sustainable development and economic opportunity.*