

# Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)

Strengthening the coordination of efforts to  
combat human trafficking



<b>Forum:</b>	Economic and Social Council
<b>Issue:</b>	Strengthening the coordination of efforts to combat human trafficking
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## Introduction

Human trafficking is a problem that plagues our society to extents greater than we imagine. The problem is so severe because of its hidden nature as well as the multi-faceted approach required to tackling it. Not only must trafficking be prevented, victims must be protected and perpetrators must be prosecuted. In order to do so, governments and organizations must work together to ensure that all aspects of trafficking are equally addressed, and that all possible measures to combat the issue are taken. This is especially challenging, as the root causes of human trafficking are so deeply intertwined with those of other key political issues, like the refugee crisis, that countries choose not to acknowledge them. Instead they choose to strengthen transparency and cooperation amongst themselves which, while helpful, only tackles one part of the problem. This research report attempts to shed light on other aspects of human trafficking, which will hopefully lead to more comprehensive solutions on the issue.



## Definition of Key Terms

### Human trafficking

Human trafficking, as defined by the protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, is any action comprised of at least one element in each column of the

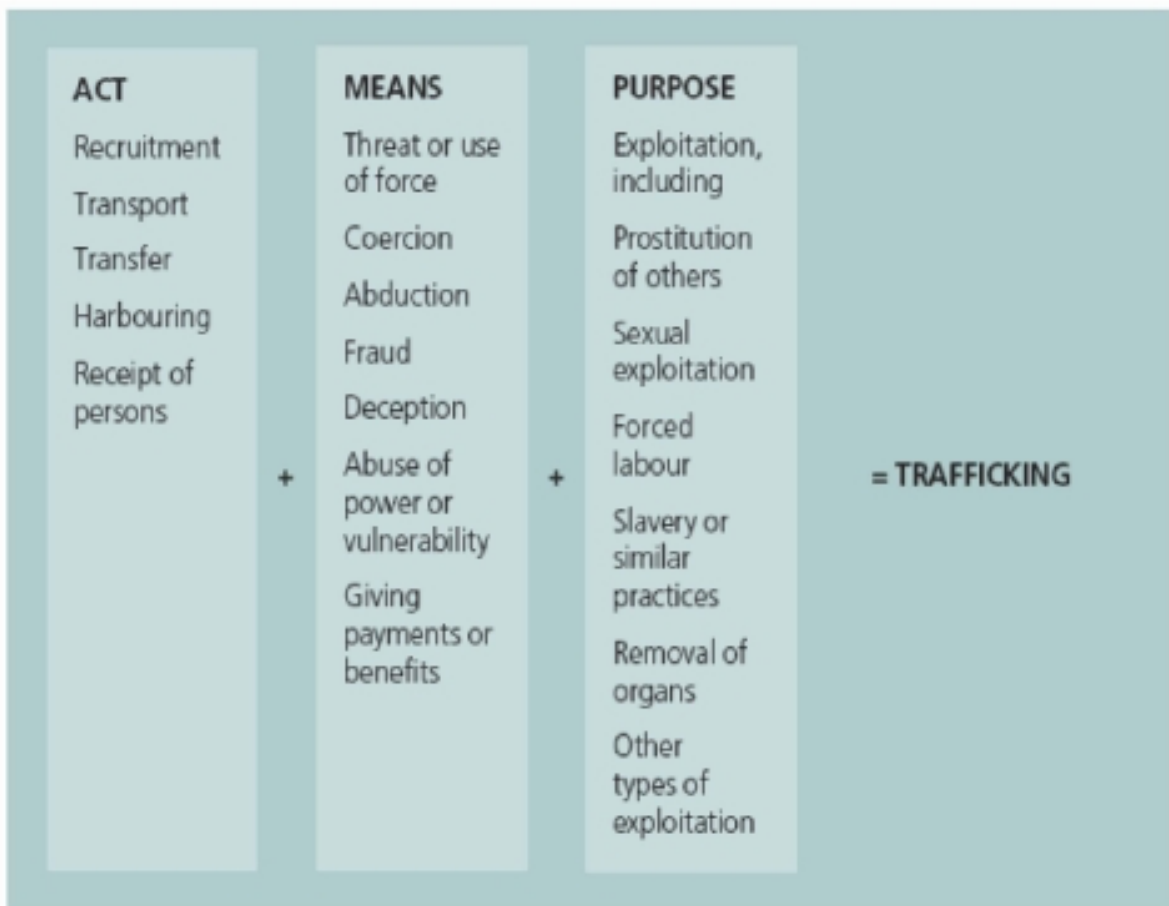


table below.

*Figure 1: Elements of human trafficking. Elements of Human Trafficking. Digital image. UNODC. N.p., n.d. Web. 18 June 2018.*

As such, human trafficking relates to the movement of people (act) through threats of deception (means) for the purpose of exploitation. Human trafficking is almost always in violation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and often of local laws as well.

### Migrant Smuggling

Migrant smuggling is the illegal movement of migrants across borders by smuggling groups. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes maintains that there are four main differences between migrant smuggling and human trafficking. Migrant smuggling is consensual, ends with the migrant's arrival at their destination, is always transnational, and the smugglers are paid by the migrants. By contrast, human trafficking is never consensual, involves the continued exploitation of victims, can be local as well as transnational, and the traffickers' income comes from exploitation of their victims. However, the distinction between the two can be easily blurred. In Africa, for example, refugees pay smugglers to take them to Libya, where it is easier to cross the Mediterranean. Along the way, their vulnerability and dependency on the migrants is often abused, and they are repeatedly sold and made to work on farms or in brothels. This situation, which begins as migrant smuggling when the migrants plan to seek refuge in Europe, turns into trafficking as they are repeatedly sold and made to work. These instances need to be equally considered under the umbrella of human trafficking.

## Refugees

Refugees are displaced people who are forced to migrate to a different country for various reasons. For the purpose of this research report, refugees are defined as those forced to flee armed conflicts, climate change, inequalities, and extreme poverty. In fleeing, or seeking a better life, these people make themselves vulnerable to traffickers, who can pose as migrant smugglers or simply employees offering them a better life elsewhere. The trafficking of refugees makes up a large part of human trafficking, and highlights the effect refugee and immigration laws can have on the issue.

## General Overview

Many people fall prey to traffickers due to desperate conditions that force them to leave their homes. In order to combat human trafficking at its roots, it is crucial that these issues are fully understood. Note that many of the issues below are also reasons why refugees often flee.

## Climate Change

Climate change and extreme weather can disrupt farming specifically, which is predicted to be the main source of income for 70% of the population of developing countries. Increased monsoons and droughts continue to destroy this source of income for many. The



United Nations High Commissioner of Refugees estimates that, since 2008, 22.5 million people have been displaced due to extreme weather and climate change. These refugees must find new communities to take them in, overcrowding other areas. This can often lead to conflict over the distribution of resources, which quickly become insufficient, and this can lead to unrest in the area. Thus, the problems caused by climate change are twofold. Firstly, those originally displaced become vulnerable to traffickers in their desperate need to survive. Having been forced to move, they have lost any safety net they might have had, and are therefore completely helpless. This makes it easier for traffickers to target them and, when they do, gives the victims no real means of escape.

In addition, the displacement of large groups of people to a single area can cause conflicts to arise over limited resources. As these conflicts escalate the rule of law is often compromised, and consequently traffickers are allowed to operate with more freedom. The lack of resources can also act as an incentive for people to *become* traffickers, as they may find no other way to support themselves and their families, making the problem continually worse.

### Armed Conflicts and Persecution

Unlike climate change refugees, those fleeing armed conflicts and persecution do not simply move so far as to escape the problem, but attempt to reach a better life, often in Europe. Because of this, they are extremely reliant on migrant smugglers, who often turn out to be traffickers or part of human trafficking circles. Armed conflicts also lead to a lack of rule of law, which allows for traffickers to act freely and prevents the government from giving the problem attention. Armed conflict and persecution both compound pre-existing issues, such as poverty and class inequality. These issues further social divide, making groups even more vulnerable and further easing the work of traffickers.

### Stigma

A stigma towards trafficking victims, specifically sex trafficking victims, prevents them from receiving the necessary aid required to get out of their situation. Many fear persecution for coming forward, as the acts they are forced to partake in are illegal themselves, and others fear they will become outcasts in their societies.



## Major Parties Involved

### UNHCR

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is the UN organization mandated to protect refugees, forcibly displaced communities and stateless people, and assist in their voluntary repatriation, local integration or resettlement to a third country. Due to the high number of trafficking victims starting out as refugees or displaced people, the UNHCR plays a large role in combating trafficking by working to end the vulnerability of victims before they are trafficked. It is therefore essential in tackling some of the root causes of vulnerability, as specified above.

### ICAT

After prevalent organizations convened in Tokyo in September 2006, it was decided that they needed a platform to optimize their coordination. The Inter-agency Coordination Group Against Trafficking in Persons (ICAT) was thus created, and serves as a platform so these organizations can share relevant information and experiences with each other. Their goal is to improve the way we combat human trafficking and ensure that methods are cohesive and well-structured.

### UN.GIFT

Launched in March 2006, the United Nations Global Initiative to Fight Trafficking (UN.GIFT) aims to increase the knowledge and awareness of human trafficking around the world and to support victims and potential victims. It also supports the prosecution of traffickers and works to coordinate international efforts to combat trafficking by strengthening partnerships between countries and organizations.

### The European Union

The European Union's (EU) involvement in trafficking stems mainly from its policies regarding refugees. The EU has been cracking down on refugees crossing the Mediterranean, condemning charity boats that bring them to Europe and praising stronger measures against migrants. Certain member states have also strengthened their laws against refugees. Italy has refused to allow refugee boats to dock in its ports, for example,



and funds the Libyan coast guard to send any boats carrying refugees back to shore in Africa. While these measures are helpful for Italy, they only throw refugees back into the hands of smugglers, or into situations where they are vulnerable to smugglers. The EU has been condemned by various human rights groups, such as Amnesty International for their indirect support of human trafficking in Africa, and many consider them complicit in the crisis in Libya.

## Libya

In October 2017 CNN released a video of African refugees being sold to slavery in Libya. The video sparked international outrage, and further investigation by various news agents uncovered the depth of the problem. There is currently no single government in Libya, but rather three, and they continue to fight for control over the divided population. Law enforcement in the country is extremely corrupt, and its land borders are largely unguarded. Because of this, many refugees choose to go through Libya when attempting to reach Europe. Once in the country they plan to take rafts across the Mediterranean to reach Europe, mainly Italy.

However, the lack of rule of law in Libya creates another problem. Many of the migrant smugglers that lead the refugees into the country either sell them to human traffickers or turn out to be traffickers themselves, luring people away from their countries to make them easier to trade. Traffickers within the country take advantage of the failed state to trade refugees in the open, and there are even reports of local law enforcement selling the refugees they find back to traffickers. The problem has been recently compounded when, with the support of the EU, Italy cracked down on refugees crossing the Mediterranean, and started funding the Libyan Coast Guard to keep them in. The crackdown has led to the creation of government-sanctioned detention camps within Libya where migrants are held, tortured, and made to work. Some are even sold back to trafficking rings by corrupt officials. Either way, this policy of containment has led to an estimated 400,000 to a million refugees getting trapped in Libya at the mercy of both traffickers and the government. The situation in Libya, demonstrates how lack of rule of law and government corruption can aid and embolden traffickers, and how other countries can indirectly affect trafficking through their policies.

## The United Kingdom

The situation in the United Kingdom highlights the fact that trafficking is not exclusive to third world countries, but occurs everywhere. The British government estimates that there



are tens of thousands of victims of human trafficking within the country, but their estimates keep increasing. Officials believe this is due to a lack of data on the issue, and that the government needs to procure a more comprehensive view of the issue before they can truly help victims. The country has developed the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) meant to help victims come forward, but reports show that the procedure doesn't help much. It has also been revealed that those identified by the NRM are abandoned soon after. With no way to recover from the abuse and no protection from traffickers, many are thrown back into slavery. Additionally, the UK is one of the few countries where a majority of trafficking victims are foreign, mainly coming from Albania, Vietnam, Nigeria, Romania and Poland. Essentially, victims in the United Kingdom are from all over the world, linking the traffickers there to an international network. Because of this, many believe that a crackdown on the traffickers in the UK could eventually lead to an international crackdown.

## Timeline of Key Events

<b>Date</b>	<b>Description of Event</b>
<b>October 2017</b>	Video of the slave trade in Libya posted to CNN
<b>March 2013</b>	General Assembly Resolution 67/190
<b>July 2008</b>	ECOSOC Resolution 2008/23 passed
<b>September 2006</b>	ICAT established
<b>March 2006</b>	UN.GIFT established
<b>September 2003</b>	Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (CTOC) has entered into force
<b>November 2000</b>	CTOC adopted

## Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

The CTOC entered into force in September 2003. Since its adoption, countries who previously lacked legislation regarding human trafficking have brought legislation into force. However, not all governments were capable of passing such legislation and the creation of ICAT and the UN.GIFT were to quell this disparity.

These organizations helped countries reach the goals outlined in the CTOC, and further established frameworks of cooperation between nations. This made the fight against





trafficking a more international effort and therefore a more cohesive one. These organizations continue to work together and with nations to prevent trafficking, protect the victims, and prosecute the perpetrators.

The passing of ECOSOC resolution 2008/23 served to further encourage nations to ratify the CTOC and to support anti-human trafficking organizations, such as ICAT and the UN.GIFT.

## Possible Solutions

Solutions to human trafficking must address prevention of trafficking, protection of the victims, and prosecution of the perpetrators.

Prevention of trafficking involves tackling the aforementioned root causes of vulnerability. This not only means working to end armed conflict and climate change, but also working towards improving the lives of refugees. Because of this, there is a very broad range of solutions to the issue, all of which are extremely complex. Armed conflicts can be helped with negotiations for peace talks and the implementation of international pressures on countries that refuse to cease fighting. Solutions to the climate change problem can comprise of plans to lower the use of fossil fuels by nations and corporations, and to further tax emissions. Collecting further data on the issue is also essential. More straightforward solutions can be formulated in regards to refugees, however. Countries should prioritize saving lives in any plans to address the crisis and work to get refugees out of situations where they are most vulnerable. The reopening of borders is a crucial step in this process. Additionally, further investigations into human rights violations and participation in human trafficking by certain government officials, like in Libya, will help condemn and stop the crisis.

The protection of victims is harder to tackle internationally, as it tends to be needed on a local level. It is advised that countries implement safety nets in the law that help victims after they are found, and work to alleviate stigma towards them that impedes them from seeking help. For example, follow-up from organizations like the NRM in England will be a step in the right direction.

Prosecuting traffickers is also a local issue, and relies heavily on the implementation of anti-trafficking laws and government crackdown on trafficking. Legislation should be passed where necessary, and otherwise enforced. One should also decide who would



enforce such laws in failed states, and where to prosecute the perpetrators of transnational trafficking.

## Appendices

### Appendix A

Global report on trafficking in persons 2018:

<http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/human-trafficking/global-report-on-trafficking-in-persons.html>

### Appendix B

United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons:

[http://www.unodc.org/documents/humantrafficking/United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons.pdf](http://www.unodc.org/documents/humantrafficking/United_Nations_Global_Plan_of_Action_to_Combat_Trafficking_in_Persons.pdf)

### Appendix C

General Assembly resolution 67/190:

[http://www.un.org/en/ga/president/67/issues/trafficking/GA%20Res.%2067\\_190%20Trafficking%20in%20persons.pdf](http://www.un.org/en/ga/president/67/issues/trafficking/GA%20Res.%2067_190%20Trafficking%20in%20persons.pdf)

### Appendix D

ECOSOC resolution 2008/23:

<http://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/docs/2008/resolution%202008-33.pdf>

### Appendix E

ICAT Webpage:

<http://icat.network/>

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