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HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL  
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### **PROMOTION AND PROTECTION OF ALL HUMAN RIGHTS, CIVIL, POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS, INCLUDING THE RIGHT TO DEVELOPMENT**

**Written statement\* submitted by Jubilee Campaign,  
a non-governmental organization in special consultative status**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[20 February 2008]

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\* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

### Human-trafficking in Eastern Europe

Statistics on global trafficking tend, according to UNESCO to “take on a life of their own, gaining acceptance through repetition, often with little inquiry into their derivations.” Therefore only rough estimates can help us envision the depth and breadth of trafficking, the third most lucrative form of trafficking in the world after drugs and arms.<sup>1</sup> The UN estimates that in 2003 almost 4 million people were trafficked worldwide.<sup>2</sup> According to UN statistics, the vast majority of victims of traffickers are women and children. Every year, millions of women and children are lured, abducted, sold or coerced into bonded labour and forced prostitution. Since the problem of trafficking has been identified and recognized by the world community several initiatives have been undertaken to combat this phenomenon at all the various levels; international, national, regional and local. These initiatives have however proven unable to completely stem the tide of human trafficking.

Traffic along the ‘Balkan corridor’<sup>3</sup> is particularly heavy. A recent OSCE-sponsored meeting in Skopje, Macedonia, heard how an estimated 200,000 women in south eastern Europe (SEE) are victims of human trafficking each year.<sup>4</sup> Many women and children end up in Greece or Italy, working in brothels or begging on the streets. Although statistics do show a decrease in the number of trafficking victims since the implementation of various initiatives experts believe that trafficking is not declining but, ‘due to changing patterns, has become less visible’.<sup>5</sup>

The primary reason for the continued trafficking in this region lies in the lack of implementation and monitoring of the existing international treaties, regional agreements and national legislation. Lack of coordination among the countries and the countless other actors in this field also contributes to the ineffectiveness of current anti-trafficking efforts.

The supply or push factors contributing to the continued phenomenon of trafficking are well documented. These include; globalisation and the feminisation of poverty; traditional and cultural practices; lack of education and employment opportunities; discrimination based on ethnicity or minority status; conflict, refugees and internal displacement and selective migration policies<sup>6</sup>.

To finally put an end to trafficking therefore every supply factor must be addressed individually and in relationship to the other contributing factors. Poverty is at the root of many of the factors and therefore requires special attention. As long as men, women and children live in poverty and see no other options open to them they will not only be more vulnerable to the manipulations and cons of traffickers but some will even choose to take the risk of being trafficked for the small chance that the taken risk may pay off and lead them to a better life.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.un.org/webcast/pdfs/941.pdf](http://www.un.org/webcast/pdfs/941.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> [www.unescobkk.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload/culture/Trafficking/project/Graph\\_Worldwide\\_Sept\\_2004.pdf](http://www.unescobkk.org/fileadmin/user_upload/culture/Trafficking/project/Graph_Worldwide_Sept_2004.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> The countries involved in the ‘Balkan corridor’ include; Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Moldova, Romania, Serbia & Montenegro and the UN administered Province of Kosovo

<sup>4</sup> [www.iwpr.net/index.php?apc\\_state=henibcr&s=o&o=archive/bcr3/bcr3\\_200301\\_ir\\_eng\\_rev.txt](http://www.iwpr.net/index.php?apc_state=henibcr&s=o&o=archive/bcr3/bcr3_200301_ir_eng_rev.txt)

<sup>5</sup> UNICEF, 2005, Trafficking in Human Beings in South Eastern Europe, p. 49

<sup>6</sup> James, C. and S. Atler, Trafficking of Young Women, ECPAT International, 2004, pp. 74- 77

Demand or pull factors include; growing demand for cheap, submissive labour; commercialisation and the sex industry; HIV/AIDS; perceptions of a better life elsewhere; the failure of national child protection systems; trafficking is a low-risk, high-profit trade and poor enforcement of international treaties.

Inadequate attention is paid to combating this second half of the trafficking equation. Countries must be more proactive in eliminating these factors for as long as the sex industry is allowed to thrive and for as long as there is a demand for cheap labour; men, women and children will continue to be targeted by those willing to profit from the misery and exploitation of others. The profiteers themselves, both individuals and organized crime syndicates, also deserve special attention. Countries must actively seek out, prosecute and punish traffickers for their involvement in the trade so as to deter others looking to make a profit in this manner. Sentences must reflect not only the damage done to the lives of the traffickers direct victims but also the damage done to the global community as a whole. To eliminate trafficking each act must be weighed in context and dealt with accordingly.

Another issue that must be addressed is the frequency of re-victimization. Appropriate steps must be taken to ensure that victims, once rescued, do not end up back in this cycle of exploitation. Victims must be accorded those tools – such as physical protection, medical attention, visas, housing, work permits etc. – necessary to ensure that, whether they return to their country of origin, remain in the country of destination or choose to move to a third country, they are not re-trafficked.

International organizations, namely the United Nations (UN), regional organisations, in particular the European Union (EU), and the national governments concerned need to be (continually) mindful of the importance and necessity of combating trafficking; as the danger of trafficking taking a backseat to ‘more pressing’ issues is always present. All players on the international stage must never forget the individual and societal costs of such an abhorrent practice and that putting an end to trafficking will benefit both individual and society.

We call on all national governments to follow through on the commitments they have made by signing the 2003 United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime (UNCATOC) and its protocol, the 2003 Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (2003 Protocol). We call on all States who have not yet signed or ratified either the convention or protocol (Kosovo, Moldova, Hungary and the European Community) to do so immediately and to undertake activities to eliminate the traffick in human beings today rather than tomorrow.

Bringing an end to the individual and societal devastation caused by trafficking requires constant vigilance, activity and, most importantly, coordination between countries of origin, transit and destination. We call on the governments involved to actively cooperate with their neighbours and to coordinate their efforts so as to greatly improve the effectiveness of their National Plans of Action.

Trafficking in human beings is a form of slavery that has been allowed to continue – and even thrive – for far too long. Just over one hundred years ago the world thought it had put an end to slavery, an end to the forced removal of men, women and children from their homes and the forced enslavement of a people. Trafficking is however a modern day form

of slavery and should be outlawed and eradicated with the same conviction and dedication it was a century ago.

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