

Soroptimist International Draft Oral Statement for UNDOC Vienna Oct 2018

Thank you for this opportunity to address you and to raise our concerns.

Members of Soroptimist International in 122 countries have for many years been working on the ground in every community to raise awareness of the pernicious crime of modern day slavery, fuelled by the growing and extensive crime of human trafficking. As a leading worldwide organisation of women working together to advance the human rights and status of women and girls, Soroptimist International has been advocating on behalf of women and girls locally, nationally and internationally to draw attention to this crime and alert communities to take action to prevent and counter it. Members have provided practical support for victims and survivors, as well as working in partnership with other major organisations to bring the perpetrators to justice and free their victims.

Exploitation of women and children is rife across many industries and sectors such as domestic service, construction, garment manufacture and agriculture but the most extensive exploitation of women and girls is found in the commercial sex industry.

Soroptimists provide direct support to the many women and girls rescued from subjugation by offering access to education and health facilities, as well as providing immediate contributions of personal items to those who have nothing when freed. Members work in partnership with local authorities and other members of civil society to ensure the mental and physical recovery of women and girls and assist them to regain confidence, dignity and self respect. They assist in empowering women and girls to find other forms of employment and income.

It is because of this very direct and practical experience in so many communities that Soroptimist International urges all Member States to work together in co-operation to:

- identify and strengthen measures to alleviate the factors which render women and girls more vulnerable to trafficking and exploitation including poverty, lack of education, and lack of opportunity;
- adopt a human rights based approach to ensure that anti-trafficking measures do not adversely affect the rights of women and girls who have been trafficked into slavery, particularly their rights to freedom of movement and to uphold women's rights to live free from violence;
- seek to implement proactive systematic victim identification strategies designed to fit a wide range of settings and circumstances, for example ensuring that front line law enforcement are able to recognize and support suspected victims/survivors of trafficking especially women and girls;
- provide formal anti-trafficking training for law enforcement, prosecutors, the judiciary, first responders, and other government officials;
- engage with the private sector to expose modern slavery labour practices ensuring that this is not an acceptable commercial practice and exposing perpetrators to public view.

We urge that all Member States work with civil society to make provision to:

- **educate** women and girls, men and boys, and entire communities about the prevalence of human trafficking and the role that each individual must play to end modern day slavery;
- **empower** women and girl victims/survivors to rebuild their lives, in particular through education, economic empowerment and opportunity;
- **enable** increased victim identification in both visible and hidden settings through widespread community awareness campaigns and work with front line responders.

We must act now to prevent and eliminate modern day slavery so that in our efforts to achieve the SDGs no-one is left behind.