

Statement by the Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women (GAATW) to the High-Level Meeting of the United Nations General Assembly on the Appraisal of the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons (13-14 May 2013)



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Mr President,

The *Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women* is a global network of more than 100 non-governmental organisations from Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean and North America.

We welcome the opportunity to address the *UN General Assembly High-Level Meeting on Trafficking in Persons*.

As we come together to appraise the *Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons*, in the year that will also mark the 10 year anniversary of the *UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children* entering into force, we can look back and see numerous, and often competing, initiatives to end human trafficking. We spend hundreds of millions of dollars in the name of ending human trafficking. Governments, UN and other intergovernmental agencies, non-governmental organisations, local activist groups, church groups, as well as celebrities, journalists and major media operations are involved in the efforts to end this human rights violation. But we do not spend enough time or money on one of the important questions – which of these efforts are effective for the people who have been trafficked?

The *Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women* report, *Collateral Damage*, described the many ways in which anti-trafficking measures often have a negative human rights impact, partly due to a lack of adequate, human rights based monitoring and evaluation of anti-trafficking responses.¹ We called for the implementation of evidence-based approaches to trafficking as a means of preventing further harm to trafficked persons and affected groups. Evidence-based approaches mean developing effective processes to integrate people who have been trafficked into the planning, implementation and evaluation of anti-trafficking projects. Yet, our research demonstrates that evaluations of anti-trafficking responses almost universally fail to include trafficked persons' and affected groups' as stakeholders in their impact analysis.² We will continue this analysis next year, when we publish the third edition of our journal, the *Anti-Trafficking Review*, that will look at the funds made available for this work – where they

¹ The Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women, *Collateral Damage: The Impact of Anti-Trafficking Measures on Human Rights around the World*, GAATW 2007, available at http://www.gaatw.org/Collateral%20Damage_Final/singlefile_CollateralDamagefinal.pdf

² The Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women, *Feeling Good About Feeling Bad... A Global Review of Evaluation in Anti-Trafficking Initiatives*, GAATW 2010, available at http://www.gaatw.org/publications/GAATW_Global_Review.FeelingGood.AboutFeelingBad.pdf

come from, who they go to, what they are meant to do, what they actually achieve, and indeed whether they are needed.³

Mr President,

The *Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons* recognises that a human rights response to trafficking in persons must put the victims of trafficking at the centre of that response. It calls on States to:

Ensure that the promotion and protection of the human rights of victims of trafficking in persons, [...] are at the centre of all efforts to prevent and combat trafficking in persons and to protect, assist and provide redress to victims;⁴

This follows the first principle identified by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights' in the *Recommended Principles and Guidelines on Human Rights and Human Trafficking*.⁵ Those went on to recognise:

*...the important contribution that survivors of trafficking can, on a strictly voluntary basis, make to developing and implementing anti-trafficking interventions and evaluating their impact.*⁶

This is a vital aspect of anti-trafficking activities, so that we ensure that our efforts do not reinforce gender stereotypes, as these may harm rather than help trafficked persons, particularly women. States and other actors need to recognise survivors of trafficking as decision-makers in their own lives and ensure that anti-trafficking responses and service providers do not perpetuate discrimination against women by making important decisions on behalf of trafficked persons without their knowledge or consent.

We need to learn from those with experience of our anti-trafficking efforts – people who have been trafficked. Furthermore, we need to consult and collaborate with migrant workers and informal sector workers, particularly sex workers, in identifying measures so that their knowledge and experience can fully inform policies and programmes to prevent abuses, including any unintended consequences of anti-trafficking initiatives. We need to act on what we learn from these collaborations to improve the anti-trafficking response and to hold accountable state and non-state actors for any human rights abuses committed in the name of ending trafficking.

³ Call for Papers: Anti-Trafficking Review Issue 3, to be published 2014, Special Issue: Following the Money: Spending on Anti-Trafficking, <http://www.antitraffickingreview.org/11-main/17-call-for-papers-anti-trafficking-review-issue-3-to-be-published-2014.html>

⁴ UN *Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons*, para.3

⁵ *Recommended Principles and Guidelines on Human Rights and Human Trafficking, Addendum to the Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to the Economic and Social Council*, UN document E/2002/68/Add.1, 20 May 2002, Principle 1: *The human rights of trafficked persons shall be at the centre of all efforts to prevent and combat trafficking and to protect, assist and provide redress to victims.*

⁶ *Recommended Principles and Guidelines on Human Rights and Human Trafficking, Addendum to the Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to the Economic and Social Council*, UN document E/2002/68/Add.1, 20 May 2002, Guideline 3, para.6

We regret that the modalities for this High Level Meeting were decided on so late, precluding the participation of many NGOs. This is not good practice. It goes against the spirit and the letter of the law to prevent human trafficking, which is clear in its recognition of NGOs and other civil society actors as part of the anti-trafficking response. The *Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons* too recognises the roles of civil society in this work. As part of that response, we too must be accountable for our actions and that is made more difficult if we cannot get into the room and be part of the conversation.

Thank you.