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Forum of Women Parliamentarians
Item 4

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10 September 2022

Contributing to the work of the 145th IPU Assembly from a gender perspective

Tuesday, 11 October 2022, 15:00 – 16:15

I. Arrangements for the debate

Participants will be invited to discuss the draft resolution that is on the agenda of the 145th Assembly entitled *Parliamentary impetus to local and regional development of countries with high levels of international migration and to stopping all forms, including state-sponsored, of human-trafficking and human rights abuses* (Standing Committee on Democracy and Human Rights). Participants will discuss the draft resolution from a gender perspective and issue recommendations on gender-related amendments to be submitted by the Forum of Women Parliamentarians to the Standing Committee.

After a short presentation on the draft resolution, the Forum will debate it in plenary. On the recommendation of its Bureau, the Forum will designate a rapporteur. The Rapporteur will submit a set of recommendations based on the debate to the Forum of Women Parliamentarians later in the afternoon.

II. Focus of the debate

The debate will focus on the following main gender aspects of the draft resolution: upholding a rights-based, gender-responsive approach to migration; addressing the root causes of trafficking and sexual exploitation of women and girls; and ensuring survivor-centered anti-trafficking legislation and enforcement.

Women constitute nearly half of the world's migrants, but they face specific forms of discrimination and abuse in the context of international migration. Women migrant workers tend to be employed in sectors that are among the least protected and lowest paid, such as the domestic work sector where they are often employed as undocumented migrants. Migrant women also tend to be overrepresented in family reunification schemes, meaning that their residence permit is generally linked to that of their husband. Such a dependency is a factor of vulnerability as a woman might have to remain in an abusive relationship to avoid being expelled. The occurrence or threat of gender-based violence and abuse, including forced marriage and female genital mutilation, in the country of origin can also lead women to seek asylum abroad. However, even though they face such danger they might not always be granted refugee status.

Women and girls in displacement – including due to climate-related disasters and conflict – or in migration are also particularly exposed to the threat of trafficking. Human trafficking involves the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of forced labour or sexual exploitation. It is based on the abuse of the inherent vulnerability of the victims. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), in 2018, for every

10 trafficking victims detected globally, about five were adult women and two were girls. Women and girls represented 35% of detected labour trafficking victims. Data on trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation show that 94% of victims are women and girls.¹ Trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation is the fastest-growing criminal enterprise in the world, worth nearly US\$ 99 billion each year.² It affects every region in the world, either as a source, transit or destination country.

The root causes of trafficking and sexual exploitation in women and girls in the context of global migration are the following: (a) the systemic gender-based discrimination that creates the economic and social injustices experienced disproportionately by women and girls; (b) situations of conflict and humanitarian emergencies, including the consequent displacement; (c) discrimination in migration and asylum regimes; (d) the demand that fosters exploitation and leads to trafficking; and (e) the use of digital technology in trafficking.³

These root causes make it easier for trafficking networks for sexual exploitation to lure the most vulnerable women and children from developing and developed countries, and from countries in conflict, with the promise of a decent job and a safe place so that they leave their homes and head for what they think is a better and safer life. These organized networks often provide victims with fake travel documents and transport them to the destination country, where the victims find themselves forced into sexual exploitation, are held in inhumane conditions and are constantly terrorized.⁴

Parliaments have a key role to play to prevent and address human rights abuses including trafficking and sexual exploitation in the context of international migration, with particular attention to women and girls. This implies advancing a rights-based, survivor-centered, gender-responsive and child-sensitive approach to migration and trafficking, namely one that identifies and addresses existing vulnerabilities, empowers women and girls, and takes into account the gender-related threats women and girls face in origin, transit and host countries.

Anti-trafficking action should not only include enacting specific legislation but should also ensure its enforcement through appropriate and well-resourced mechanisms and duly trained personnel. Survivors must also be granted access to information on their rights as victims; to medical, psychological, social and legal services; and safe and appropriate accommodation. Technology-facilitated trafficking should be addressed by establishing regulatory frameworks that prioritize online safety. Finally, empowerment, the reduction of vulnerabilities and of the demand for trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation are key elements of prevention.

All of this requires robust action by parliaments to strengthen legislative and regulatory frameworks, oversee their realization, allocate the necessary resources to ensure implementation and foster international cooperation mechanisms to combat all forms of abuse and trafficking in women and girls in the context of international migration.

¹ UNODC, [Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2020](#).

² Equality Now, [Trafficking for sexual exploitation](#) (accessed September 2022).

³ Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW Committee), [General recommendation No.38 \(2020\) on trafficking in women and girls in the context of global migration](#) (UN Doc. CEDAW/C/GC/38, 20 November 2020).

⁴ International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL), [Types of human trafficking](#) (accessed September 2022).

Guiding questions for the debate include:

- *What economic and livelihood opportunities can dissuade women from migrating through unsafe routes and protect from the dangers of trafficking?*
- *What good practices exist that ensure migration laws and bilateral agreements do not discriminate against women due to their type of occupation or family status?*
- *How can asylum systems better take into account gender-related threats to the life or integrity of women, such as forced marriage, female genital mutilations and sexual exploitation in the context of trafficking?*
- *What legal and regulatory measures should be put in place to prevent and address trafficking and sexual exploitation, including online?*
- *What measures should be taken to ensure that trafficked women and migrant women subjected to abuse are always considered as survivors and can seek protection without being revictimized?*