Recognizing Response - Committed to the Cause

High-level virtual event on the occasion of World Day against Trafficking in Persons

organized by UNODC together with the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Belarus on behalf of the Group of Friends United Against Human Trafficking

This virtual high-level event will draw attention to the crucial roles of a range of groups of people engaged in responding to trafficking in persons. These people work in multiple different sectors, identifying, supporting, counselling and seeking justice for victims of trafficking, as well as challenging the impunity of the traffickers. This World Day against Trafficking in Persons provides an opportunity to draw attention to the important roles of such responders, particularly in the context of the global response to COVID-19.

2020 marks the 20th anniversary of the adoption of the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC) and its Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, the 10th anniversary of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, and the 10th anniversary of the establishment of the United Nation Voluntary Trust Fund for Victims of Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children. As such, this occasion also provides a timely opportunity to take stock of the enduring gaps and emerging trends in responding to trafficking in persons, as well as to recommit to working together to advance our efforts to address this crime, achieve the SDGs and build safer, more secure societies.

Background

As outlined in UNODC’s recent report on the ‘Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on trafficking in persons: preliminary findings and messaging based on rapid stocktaking’ (2020), the challenges of countering trafficking and protecting victims are compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic. With COVID-19 restricting movement, diverting law enforcement resources, and reducing social and public services, human trafficking victims have even less chance of escape and finding help. With borders closing due to the pandemic, some victims are unable to return home. Others face delays in legal proceedings, as well as a reduction in the support and protection they rely on. Some are also in danger of further abuse or neglect by their captors. It follows that, in dealing with the pandemic, we should not overlook the real and concrete risks that the
For the 2020 World Day against Trafficking in Persons, we honour the “first responders” in the fight against human trafficking – the social workers, law enforcement officers, investigators, prosecutors and civil society representatives who have kept vital services and assistance going for victims throughout the COVID-19 crisis

- Ms. Ghada Waly, UNODC Executive Director

The unprecedented situation presents for vulnerable individuals and groups who are often less visible in our societies. During the COVID-19 crisis, the essential role of these people has become even more apparent. However, their contribution is often overlooked and unrecognized. Through hearing about the work of first responders, this event will bring their essential role and its impact on fighting trafficking to the forefront. The event will also explain how the United Nations, in particular through the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons (ICAT), is supporting such responders, as well as a range of other stakeholders, in addressing trafficking in persons within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The event will be moderated by the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Belarus on behalf of the Group of Friends United against Human Trafficking. It will bring together UN entities, Member States, UNODC Goodwill Ambassador for the Global Fight against Human Trafficking Ms. Mira Sorvino, the Blue Dragon Children's Foundation, and trafficking survivor, author and activist, Ms. Marcela Loaiza.

Panellists
- H.E. Mr Valentin Rybakov, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Belarus (moderator)
- Ms. Ghada Waly, UNODC Executive Director (opening remarks)
- H.E. Mr. John Cotton Richmond, Ambassador-At-Large to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, United States
- H.E. Mr. Rubén Darío Cuéllar Suárez, Permanent Representative of Bolivia
- H.E. Mr. Marc Pecsteen de Buytewewe, Permanent Representative of Belgium
- H.E. Mr. Mohamed Fathi Ahmed Edrees, Permanent Representative of Egypt
- Ms. Sarah Lou Yismael Arriola, Undersecretary for Migrant Workers’ Affairs, Department of Foreign Affairs, Philippines
- Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, UN Women Executive Director
- Ms. Mira Sorvino, UNODC Goodwill Ambassador for the Global Fight against Human Trafficking
  [Musical/dance interlude "I Am Lost" created by Arts for Justice Collective and Oaks Christian School]
- Ms. Marcela Loaiza, Trafficking Survivor, Author and Activist
- Mr. Michael Brosowski, Founder and Co-CEO, Blue Dragon Children’s Foundation, Vietnam

Following the panel discussion, there will be an opportunity for interventions from Member States and other relevant stakeholders. Kindly register attendance by 28 July to Dmitry Yarkovich (d.yarkovich@mfa.gov.by), indicating if you intend to intervene. The event will also be webcast on UNWebTV: webtv.un.org