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I. Executive Summary

On 11 September 2026, at the 63rd session of the Human Rights Council, Ms. Katarina Schwarz, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery and trafficking in persons (hereinafter, “the Special Rapporteur”) presented her thematic report (A/HRC/63/36), alongside the findings of the former Special Rapporteur following his official visit to Brazil (A/HRC/63/36/Add.1). The thematic report, drawn up through multistakeholder consultations with States, civil society organisations (CSOs), affected communities and international agencies, outlines challenges and threats faced by states in their efforts to combat slavery and human trafficking. Exploitative practices amounting to modern slavery and human trafficking remain inadequately addressed by businesses and corporations, particularly those operating in the private sector. As this mandate has been established only recently, the report also identifies priority areas for the Special Rapporteur to focus on during her tenure.

The presentation of the report and its addendum was followed by an Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur. During which Brazil, as the country concerned, noted that contemporary forms of slavery and trafficking in persons are driven by a complex combination of historical, socio-economic and institutional factors. Recognising these structural drivers, the delegate of Brazil emphasised that the reforms being introduced within the country’s legal and institutional frameworks seek to address the legacies of slavery, social exclusion and racial discrimination. Representatives of other Member States and CSOs, participating in the interactive dialogue, placed on record evidence of how the widespread use of exploitative practices by businesses has adversely affected vulnerable communities. To prevent and address contemporary forms of slavery and human trafficking, the Special Rapporteur recommended that Member States adopt an intersectional, human rights-based response involving government agencies, business entities, survivors and CSOs. Such a response would enable States to collect evidence of human rights abuses, identify sites or practices of exploitation and undertake necessary due diligence even before human rights violations occur.

Geneva International Centre for Justice (GICJ) welcomes the report identifying challenges to combating modern slavery and human trafficking, assessing the inadequacy of existing measures to address exploitation and outlining priority areas for the Special Rapporteur’s mandate. It acknowledges that the interactive dialogue with the Special Rapporteur has brought into focus

interconnected human rights issues that may have remained unaddressed for want of an appropriate mandate. GICJ recognises the scale and severity of the human rights abuses committed by non-state actors, particularly businesses and corporations operating in the private sector. Accordingly, it calls on Member States to consider implementing the recommendations issued by the Special Rapporteur, not only to ensure accountability for violations committed, but also to prevent human rights abuses from occurring.

II. Background

In February 2026, a UN human rights report found that hundreds of thousands of trafficked workers from at least sixty-six countries were subjected to torture, sexual abuse and forced labour inside heavily guarded compounds of online scam centres operating across Southeast Asia. [1] In July 2026, the UN reported that Afghans returning from neighbouring countries faced growing risks of trafficking, exploitation, abuse and forced labour as the humanitarian crisis in the country continued to deepen. [2] More recently, in August, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), reporting on a meeting of prosecutors from across Latin America, noted how human trafficking affected thousands of individuals across Latin America and the Caribbean. According to the UNODC, the region is both a source and a destination for trafficking victims. In 2022 alone, more than four thousand victims of human trafficking were identified, with sexual exploitation and forced labour accounting for most reported cases. [3] In the absence of any legal evaluation of the facts of each of these cases, the exploitation and abuse inflicted upon these vulnerable individuals may lie within the overlap between human trafficking and contemporary forms of slavery, including forced labour or forced marriage.

Though legally distinct, contemporary forms of slavery and trafficking in persons overlap in practice. The Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (2000), commonly known as the Palermo Protocol, defines “trafficking in persons” under Article 3(a). According to the definition, trafficking in persons involves act(s) committed through specific means for the purpose of exploitation. [4] The acts of “recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, committed by the means of threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, abuse of power or a position of vulnerability or the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person

having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation.” constitute trafficking in persons.

Article 3(a) further clarifies that exploitation includes slavery or practices similar to slavery. The Slavery Convention (1926), under Article 1, defines slavery as “the status or condition of a person over whom any or all of the powers attaching to the right of ownership are exercised.” [5] Slavery and trafficking in persons are distinct offences in most jurisdictions. However, in cases of human trafficking involving slavery or slavery-like practices, evidence of such practices may establish that the victim was subjected to exploitation.

Contemporary forms of slavery and trafficking in persons are closely intertwined human rights violations. Such offences are often committed covertly in fragile and vulnerable contexts, facilitated by the use of digital technology. To address these human rights violations in a coherent and effective manner, the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery and trafficking in persons was established on 9 October 2025 pursuant to resolution 60/25. [6] This resolution merged the distinct mandate of the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and consequences, and the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, into a combined mandate of the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery and trafficking in persons.

III. Summary of the Special Rapporteur’s Report

The Report recognises that States across the globe are increasingly in the throes of a polycrisis-climate change, conflict, poverty and displacement have contributed to some of the worst forms of exploitation of individuals. As these crises intersect, existing vulnerabilities, including those arising from discrimination, marginalisation and deprivation based on gender, ethnicity, descent and race are compounded. Economic volatility and uncertainty resulting from the convergence of these crises are likely to push more workers into exploitation. The Special Rapporteur warns that entrenched exploitation heightens the risks of contemporary forms of slavery and trafficking in persons.

Additionally, the Report identifies persistent structural drivers of modern slavery and human trafficking. In this context, structural drivers may be understood as economic models or business practices that facilitate the commission of human rights violations. Exploitation is endemic in

certain industries where profit maximisation is prioritised over the protection of human rights. Without addressing these structural drivers within business operations and supply chains, workers in the private sector would continue to be subjected to exclusion and marginalisation.

Stakeholders contributing to the Report emphasised that legislative interventions by States to combat trafficking either perpetuate exclusion or fail to effectively protect victims and at-risk groups. The Report states that legislative interventions in response to human trafficking are used to restrict the rights of vulnerable groups, including women, migrant workers and other minorities. As a result, the measures adopted to combat human trafficking may further exacerbate the vulnerabilities they were intended to address. Anti-trafficking measures that impose restrictions on the reproductive rights of women, their freedom to marry and their autonomy exacerbate their vulnerabilities to gender-based violence, including forms of slavery and human trafficking. Similarly, restrictive migration measures are purportedly implemented to combat human trafficking. However, increasing criminalisation, securitisation and externalisation of migration may undermine efforts to combat trafficking and slavery. Such restrictive measures may create barriers to the identification and protection of migrants, rendering them more vulnerable to exploitation.

In the absence of robust legislative frameworks, the exploitation of workers in the private sector is normalised as a by-product of efficiency and productivity. The Report notes that corporate profit-making exerts downward pressure on wages while working conditions in most industries remain poor. Informal workers and those engaged in precarious labour, who are among the most disadvantaged in the value chain, bear the brunt of these exploitative practices. Business operators extract profits by subjecting such vulnerable individuals to abuse and exploitation. Stakeholders participating in the consultations reiterated that, although dismantling such exploitative business models is a challenge, emerging practices may help close regulatory gaps.

To combat contemporary forms of slavery and trafficking in persons, a set of measures has been proposed. The Special Rapporteur underscores that the lived experiences of survivors can inform policymaking at all levels. Accordingly, governments are encouraged to undertake meaningful and ethical engagement with survivors of trafficking and slavery. Furthermore, advanced technologies may be deployed, in coordination with businesses and governments, to collect and assess relevant data to ensure transparency in global supply chains, locate sites of risk and

exploitation and enable businesses to undertake due diligence. Corporate accountability for human rights violations in supply chains, established through robust legislative frameworks, would impose obligations on businesses and provide statutory safeguards to victims and at-risk individuals.

IV. Exhaustive Summary of the Interactive Dialogue

1. Opening Remarks by the Special Rapporteur



The Special Rapporteur, in her opening remarks, stated that the merged mandate represents a unique opportunity to advance a comprehensive, human rights-based approach to combating contemporary forms of slavery and trafficking in persons, recognising the interconnected nature of these violations and their root causes. Presenting the findings following the former Special Rapporteur's visit to Brazil, she noted that the country has made significant progress in addressing slave labour through robust legal frameworks, specialised institutions, labour inspections and sustained engagement with survivors, civil society and workers' organisations. Brazil's efforts to address contemporary forms of slavery serve as an important example for Member States facing similar human rights issues.

Despite this progress, exploitative practices continue to disproportionately affect populations facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination. Indigenous Peoples, Quilombola communities and riverside populations in Brazil remain particularly affected by environmental

destruction. Poverty, inequality, racial discrimination and social exclusion contribute to the exploitation of marginalised groups. To address these issues, Brazil has been recommended to strengthen labour inspections and ensure effective coordination with environmental inspection authorities. Although significant advances have been made, corporate accountability in Brazil remains insufficient. The interests of agribusinesses are often prioritised over the fundamental rights of workers. In accordance with the findings set out in the country report, the Special Rapporteur reiterated the urgent need to implement stronger socio-economic measures for victims of contemporary forms of slavery.

Through the presentation of her agenda-setting report, the Special Rapporteur reminded the Human Rights Council that this year marks the centenary of the Slavery Convention (1926). It is a milestone in humanity's long struggle against slavery. Yet the international community confronts a difficult reality - modern slavery and human trafficking remain widespread in every part of the world. While recent decades have seen significant progress, current trends threaten to undermine these gains. She emphasised that climate change and environmental destruction, conflict and instability, poverty and inequality, migration and displacement are mutually reinforcing. These are both drivers and by-products of contemporary forms of slavery and trafficking in persons.

While presenting the report before the Council, Ms. Schwarz also identified the challenges to addressing these interconnected human rights issues. Persistent gaps in domestic legislative frameworks, along with weak enforcement measures, continue to undermine the effective realisation of international commitments. As a result, victims remain unidentified and unprotected, while perpetrators continue to enjoy impunity. To date, access to legal remedies remains out of reach for a majority of victims and survivors. Regrettably, the efforts to prevent modern slavery and human trafficking receive far less attention and investment than they should. Though the moral imperative to abolish slavery is more compelling than ever, the nature and complexity of these challenges continue to evolve.

To combat contemporary forms of slavery and human trafficking, the Special Rapporteur proposed that States develop tools, foster partnerships and solicit expertise across policy, research and programming domains. Progress in survivor engagement, stronger coordination and advancements in research and innovative uses of technology have laid the foundation for future

action. Member States can pave the way forward by adopting an intersectional, human rights-based approach to addressing modern slavery and human trafficking. The Special Rapporteur opened the session with an appeal to States to ratify the Slavery Convention (1926) before 2 December 2026, the International Day for the Abolition of Slavery.

2. Statement by the Federative Republic of Brazil as the Concerned Country

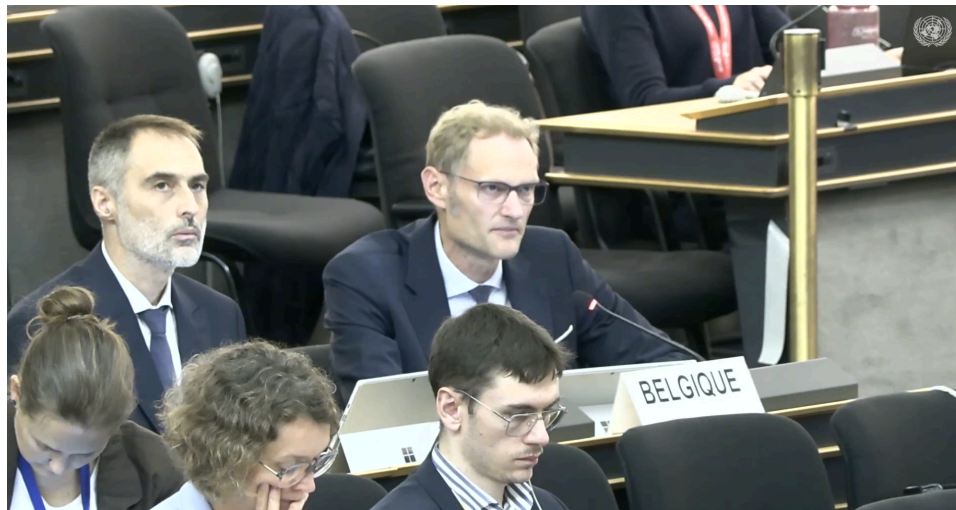


The representative of the Federative Republic of Brazil appreciated the presentation of the report following the former Special Rapporteur's visit to the country in August 2025. Brazil reiterated its firm commitment to preventing contemporary forms of slavery and trafficking in persons. The representative welcomed the recognition of the significant progress achieved in recent years. However, he acknowledged that challenges persist. Contemporary forms of slavery and trafficking in persons are driven by a combination of socio-economic, historical and institutional factors, including social inequalities, economic vulnerabilities and institutional shortcomings.

The representative further asserted that Brazil has ratified international instruments abolishing the use of forced labour, setting a minimum age for admission into employment or work and prohibiting the worst forms of child labour. He stated that in Brazil, domestic legislations have been enacted to prohibit exploitation. Additionally, national action plans have been implemented to combat human trafficking and eradicate forced labour. To protect victims of contemporary forms of slavery and human trafficking, the Government focuses on rescue, redressal and re-integration. The representative took note of the recommendations issued and committed to reviewing the remaining gaps as a matter of State priority.

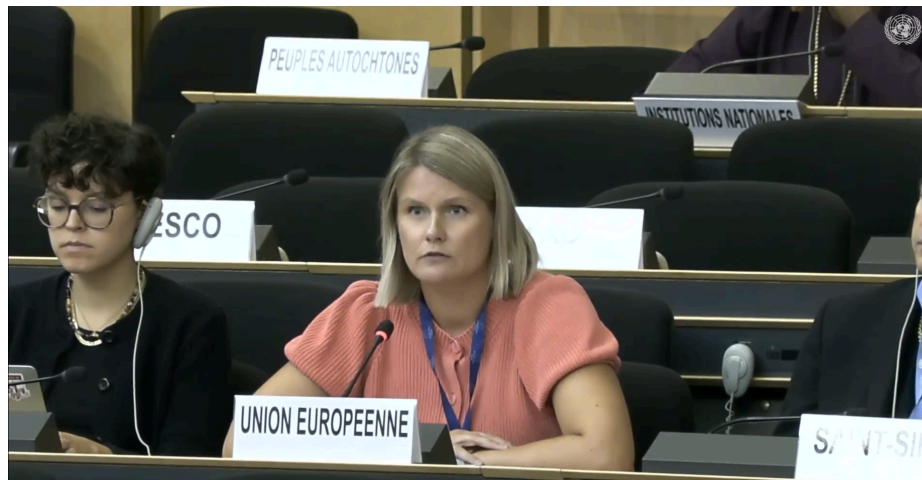
3. Statements on behalf of Group of States

The Kingdom of Belgium on behalf of the Benelux countries



The delegate of the Kingdom of Belgium, speaking on behalf of the Benelux countries, noted that, although contemporary forms of slavery and trafficking in persons remain widespread, take many forms and occur in different parts of the world, these exploitative practices disproportionately affect the most vulnerable groups, particularly women and girls. The Benelux countries acknowledged the intersectional approach adopted by the Special Rapporteur in addressing these human rights issues. The delegate stressed that eliminating slavery and human trafficking requires sustained efforts by States, civil society and private companies. He requested the Special Rapporteur to share good legislative practices for protecting victims of contemporary forms of slavery and trafficking in persons.

The European Union (EU)



The representative of the European Union (EU) recognised contemporary forms of slavery and trafficking in persons as a grave violation of human rights. She informed the Human Rights Council of the legislative interventions undertaken by the EU to strengthen anti-slavery and anti-trafficking frameworks, close accountability gaps and ensure the implementation of human rights-based, survivor-centred, gender-responsive and child-sensitive measures. Two years ago, the EU adopted the revised directive on anti-trafficking (Directive 2024/1712) criminalising “the use of a service provided by a victim of trafficking in human beings when the user of the service has knowledge that the person providing the service is a victim”. This Directive also explicitly states that the exploitation of surrogacy, forced marriage, or illegal adoption falls within the scope of offences concerning trafficking in human beings.

The representative added that the EU has closed the market for forced labour through robust regulatory frameworks. The EU Forced Labour Regulation prohibits products made with forced labour anywhere in the world from entering the EU market with the possibility that affected workers may receive compensation before such products re-enter. She concluded her statement by requesting the Special Rapporteur to offer her views on addressing regulatory gaps to ensure effective victim protection.

The Kingdom of Thailand on behalf of a cross-regional group of over forty countries



The representative of the Kingdom of Thailand, speaking on behalf of a cross-regional group of over forty countries, raised alarm over the industrial scale at which online scam centres are operating. Noting that over three hundred thousand workers from eighty countries are subjected to forced labour, torture and sexual exploitation in these online scam centres, she drew attention to the human rights implications of such illegal operations. Scam networks are expanding globally, linking forced labour, human trafficking and transnational organised crime. These operations sustain and expand due to pervasive corruption. She highlighted that addressing these issues requires a coordinated global response rooted in human rights. Accordingly, the cross-regional group called for enhanced cooperation to disrupt illicit financial flows, combat corruption, prosecute criminal networks and ensure accountability.

The Republic of Kenya on behalf of the African Group



The delegate of the Republic of Kenya, on behalf of the African Group, noted with concern that persons in vulnerable situations, particularly persons of African descent, remain susceptible to various forms of exploitation and abuse. He reaffirmed that the African Group is committed to addressing these human rights issues. In this regard, the African Union Policy on the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons in Africa constitutes an important framework for strengthening victim protection and promoting cooperation among States to ensure accountability for criminal networks involved in human trafficking. Considering the scale and transnational nature of these human rights violations, the delegate appealed to Member States to foster international cooperation, particularly at the cross-border, regional and inter-regional levels.

The Federal Republic of Nigeria on behalf of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)



The delegate of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, speaking on behalf of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), noted that the ECOWAS region continues to face the challenges of contemporary forms of slavery and trafficking in persons. The West African region has been grappling with poverty, inequality, climate change and forced displacement. The delegate welcomed the Special Rapporteur's emphasis on addressing structural drivers that create and exacerbate vulnerabilities. For ECOWAS States, mobility remains central to earning livelihoods and accessing economic opportunities. The ECOWAS framework on Free Movement of Persons reflects this reality. Legitimate movement must be facilitated while preventing and addressing human trafficking, abusive recruitment and forced labour. To expand safer migration pathways and guarantee worker protection, the delegate proposed that ECOWAS States, the UN and other relevant partners deepen their cooperation on matters of cross-border referral, victim protection, data sharing and investigations.

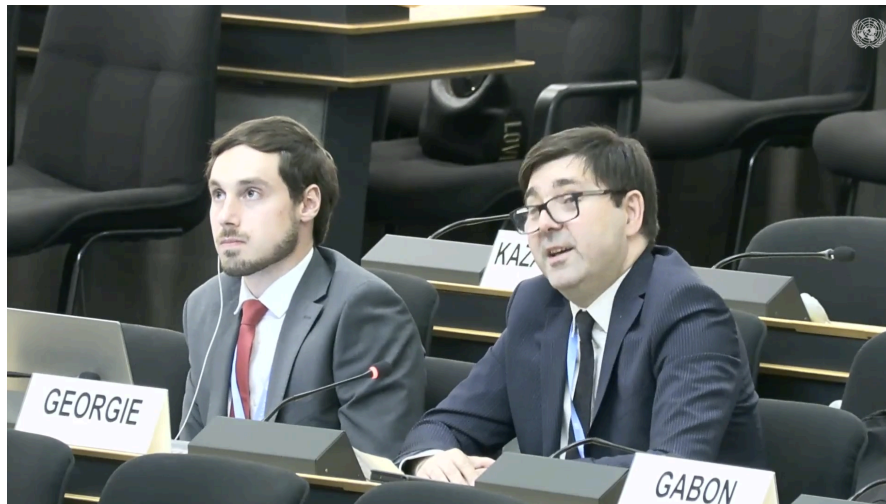
The Republic of Iceland on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic States



The delegate of the Republic of Iceland delivered the oral statement on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic States. He asserted that the fight against contemporary forms of slavery and trafficking requires a global response. The Nordic-Baltic States advocated for coherent and multidimensional action at all levels. The delegate noted that, on the one hand, emerging technologies present complex challenges in the fight against contemporary forms of slavery and trafficking in persons while, on the other hand, such technologies aid and assist in identifying and preventing grave human rights violations. Accordingly, he requested the Special Rapporteur to outline key factors that States should take into account when regulating the digital environment to address modern slavery and human trafficking.

4. Relevant Oral Statement by Other Delegation

The Republic of Georgia



The representative of the Republic of Georgia affirmed that combating trafficking in persons is a state priority. At the national level, the Interagency Coordinating Council for Combating Human Trafficking brings together relevant stakeholders to facilitate coordinated implementation of anti-trafficking policies. The representative shared that Georgia has maintained Tier 1 ranking in the U.S. State Department Trafficking in Persons Report for ten consecutive years. However, the representative regretted that the illegal occupation of certain regions in Georgia has been an obstacle to the implementation of anti-trafficking measures. At present, no mechanisms exist to identify, investigate and prosecute perpetrators of human trafficking in the illegally occupied regions of Georgia.

5. Statements by U.N Agencies

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)



The representative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) observed that modern slavery and human trafficking affect over 50 million people worldwide and generate more than two hundred and thirty six billion dollars in illicit profits each year. She shared the Special Rapporteur's concerns that businesses can create conditions for exploitation to persist, particularly where oversight and accountability measures remain weak. She further noted that the financial sector could play an important role in preventing contemporary forms of slavery and human trafficking. Through risk disclosure, responsible investment, survivor-centred financial inclusion and human rights due diligence, financial institutions can address risks across value chains. The representative added that the UNDP Finance against Slavery and Trafficking is one such initiative that enables government agencies, financial institutions and survivors to leverage financial resources in their efforts to combat modern slavery and human trafficking.

6. Statements by CSOs

Civil society actors echoed a similar sentiment: slavery has not been abolished; it has only changed its form. The oral statements drew much-needed attention to victim identification and protection, as CSOs are often the first points of contact for victims and survivors of modern slavery and human trafficking. Survivors are, in fact, witnesses to changing realities and are better informed about the failings of systems intended to protect them. Effective coordination

among government institutions, CSOs representing victims' interests and law enforcement agencies would help ensure that victims are formally identified, adequately protected and guaranteed timely access to remedies.

CSOs presented deeply concerning reports from various regions, elaborating on how converging crises affect vulnerable communities. In the Rasuwa and Nuwakot districts of Nepal, recent flash floods have forcibly displaced countless people, heightening the risks of gender-based violence and trafficking among women, girls and other unaccompanied children. Reports concerning plantation workers in Sri Lanka being subjected to slavery-like conditions corroborate the Special Rapporteur's assessment of how poverty and inequality exacerbate vulnerabilities among at-risk groups. From Asia to Africa, the situation remains bleak. One CSO reiterated that the Tindouf camps in southwestern Algeria bear testimony to the harsh realities of protracted displacement. The exercise of jurisdiction over refugees in these camps has been a matter of contestation. As a result, institutional constraints continue to impede the assessment of vulnerability risks, identification of victims and access to effective remedies.

7. Concluding Remarks by the Special Rapporteur

In her concluding remarks, the Special Rapporteur acknowledged that, despite the challenges, the will and commitment to eradicate contemporary forms of slavery and trafficking in persons remain firm. She welcomed the recognition of an intersectional and interconnected human rights-based approach to addressing these violations. More importantly, the Special Rapporteur expressed her willingness to provide technical assistance and institutional support for wider engagement on these issues.

Responding to questions related to implementation of good practices, the Special Rapporteur recommended that States establish national referral mechanisms to facilitate coordinated responses across sectors. Such mechanisms would ensure that victims and survivors receive critical support and assistance. Moreover, embedding the principle of non-punishment into domestic legal frameworks would safeguard victims and survivors from being subjected to criminal prosecution for acts committed as a direct consequence of being enslaved or trafficked. To ensure the protection of victims and survivors, justice delivery processes must prioritise their recovery and reintegration into society.

While answering questions on the role of technology in combating contemporary forms of slavery and trafficking in persons, the Special Rapporteur cautioned against the risks posed by technology while also recognising its potential to provide constructive solutions. Predictive and early warning systems may prevent human rights violations from occurring. In this context, she emphasised that non-state actors, particularly technology companies, could help States step up their efforts to prevent and address human rights violations. Incorporating safety by design into technology platforms and digital infrastructure would build resilience into these systems.

She concluded by recalling that the past one hundred years have borne witness to the formalisation of international commitments to eradicate contemporary forms of slavery. But the centenary presents a difficult reality. Despite international commitments, contemporary forms of slavery and trafficking in persons remain pervasive. To translate these international commitments into reality, the Special Rapporteur urged Member States to draw on the voices, expertise and experiences of survivors and address these challenges in the years ahead.

V. Position of the Geneva International Centre for Justice

Geneva International Centre for Justice (GICJ) expresses concern over the increasing use of exploitative practices by corporations and business entities to maximise profits. It asserts that the human rights of workers involved in supply chains are inviolable, and any business or private-sector entity that fails to respect and protect these human rights must be held accountable. **GICJ** acknowledges that the compounded vulnerabilities of workers in the private sector, particularly migrants, women and racial or ethnic minorities, render them more susceptible to discrimination, marginalisation and exclusion. Recognising the interconnectedness between contemporary forms of slavery and trafficking in persons, it welcomes the merged mandate of the Special Rapporteur established pursuant to resolution 60/25.

To strengthen global efforts against contemporary forms of slavery and trafficking in persons, Member States are recommended to:

- (1) Undertake measures to evaluate and mitigate risks arising from converging crises of climate change, displacement, poverty and conflict;
- (2) Identify and address persistent structural drivers of contemporary forms of slavery and trafficking in persons that prioritise profit-making over human rights protection;

- (3) Ratify the Slavery Convention (1926) and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime (2000);
- (4) Recognise the compounded vulnerabilities faced by specific social groups, including, but not limited to, women, migrant workers, and workers in precarious employment to ensure effective access to legal remedies;
- (5) Recalibrate policy measures or interventions that exacerbate existing vulnerabilities faced by at-risk groups;
- (6) Refrain from enforcing statutory provisions on human trafficking in a manner that infringes upon or unreasonably restricts the fundamental rights of individuals;
- (7) Encourage businesses to commit to the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and embed corporate accountability into domestic legislative frameworks to ensure that these voluntary guidelines translate into enforceable obligations.

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