



Oral presentation by Caritas Internationalis with the support of its members: Secours Catholique – Caritas France, Caritas Albania, Caritas Kosovo. Thirty-fifth session of the Human Rights Council, 6-23 June 2017.

Agenda Item 3, Report of the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children.

Geneva, June 9, 2017

Mr. President,

Caritas Internationalis and its member organisations, Secours Catholique – Caritas France which coordinates the collective “Together against human trafficking”¹, Caritas Albania and Caritas Kosovo, welcomed with great interest the report concerning “*Strengthening voluntary standards for businesses on preventing and combating trafficking in persons and labour exploitation, especially in supply chains*”. We commit ourselves with the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons in this area in order to avoid tragedies like those seen in some countries where numerous workers in situations of forced labour and trafficking died in factories, and with the aim of avoiding all abuse in the economic sphere in violation of human rights. The involvement of all links of the supply chain is necessary and requires wide awareness-raising around trafficking in human beings.

In view of the next report announced by the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons: “The vulnerability of children to trafficking in persons and other forms of violence in conflicts and humanitarian crises”, in collaboration with the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, Caritas Internationalis is moreover particularly concerned by **the situation of children who are victims or at risk of trafficking in situations of conflict or humanitarian crises**. In fact, humanitarian crises, natural catastrophes, unstable contexts, situations of conflict linked to flagrant violations of human rights, often trigger forced displacements and major migratory movements. Children are particularly vulnerable to trafficking and exploitation in these contexts, because the displacements create family instability and destroy community structures. Impoverished, vulnerable families are targets for traffickers who promise to provide an education or training and in fact exploit them: **forced labour, sexual exploitation, begging, crimes, organ trafficking**. Other minors are forced by their own family to work in these conditions of exploitation or to go through **a forced or servile marriage...non-accompanied or isolated minors run an increased risk of trafficking** all along their journey but also in overcrowded camps. Many disappear, a large number are exploited to survive or kept in captivity to be exchanged for a ransom.

¹ This position document was drawn up by Caritas Internationalis, Secours Catholique – Caritas France, Caritas Albania and Caritas Kosovo

It is urgent to:

1 – Make this hidden phenomenon visible to fight it

Children at risk and those who are victims of trafficking too often remain invisible. Awareness of trafficking must be reinforced among the general public, in companies, in schools, and among professionals working with children. Identification processes have to be clarified.

2. Help children at risk and victims of trafficking to recover

Once they have been identified, they have to deal with discrimination, stigmatisation, lack of assistance and support for reintegration at a time when they need wide-ranging aid: on the social, health, housing, education, administrative and legal front ...

The specific physical and psychological needs of child victims of trafficking often remain unsatisfied, compromising their long-term development.

3. Establish a status of victim without criminalising children

Procedures have to be established based on the victims, that do not transform child victims into offenders. The principle of non-criminalisation must always be applied.

4. Provide a legal representative for each child, guarantor of the application of children's rights within the framework of common law: not sub-rights.

We are particularly concerned for non-accompanied minors who often do not have a legal representative when they should have access to guardianship. The guardians or ad hoc administrators – when they exist – will have to be informed at each stage of the procedure.

5 - Permit access to interpreters when necessary

Member states must be more attentive to this issue and ensure that services representing minors have access to interpreters.

6 – Develop training for professionals and volunteers on child trafficking

Training of all professionals and volunteers concerned (in education, police, the justice system, social work...) should be reviewed and systemised to reinforce everyone's capacities. Civil society and institutions must collaborate more in this domain.

7 – Open immigration policies

Restrictive and exclusive immigration policies, inadequate protection for child migrants, and difficulties in reunifying families all contribute to an increase in trafficking.

There is no doubt that the work taken up by the special rapporteurs on trafficking in persons, particularly children, and on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, will make it possible to make progress on this issue. The Caritas network is committed to pursuing its action at the local, national, continental and international level.

Mr. President, we call on all parties to assume their legal and moral responsibility to ensure that all children, everywhere in the world, will soon be released from all trafficking and exploitation and living in a favourable environment

Thank you, Mr. President.