

The 14th session of the Human Rights Council

Panel on Trafficking in Persons, especially women, and children and the victims

“Giving Voice to the Victims and Survivors of Trafficking”

Human Rights and Alliance of Civilizations Chamber (Room XX), Palais des Nations, Geneva

Date and Venue

2 June 2010, 15:00 to 18:00, during the fourteenth session of the Human Rights Council.

Focus and objectives

HRC decision 13/117 adopted by the Human Rights Council in March 2010 decides to “hold a panel discussion at its fourteenth session to give voice to victims of trafficking in persons, with due considerations for the psychological well-being of the victims involved, with a view to reinforcing the centrality of their human rights and needs, and taking into account their recommendations when devising actions to combat human trafficking”, and to request the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner to organize the panel, with the participation of the High Commissioner, the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, and the victims of trafficking in persons”.

The decision also requests that the OHCHR encourages the presence of relevant UN human rights mechanisms, relevant UN specialized agencies as well as civil society and national human rights mechanisms, in the panel discussion.

Opening statement: Ms Kyung-wha Kang, Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights. Introduction to the panel by Ms Joy Ngozi Ezeilo, Special Rapporteur on Trafficking in Persons.

Moderator: H.E. Ambassador Alex Van Meeuwen, President of the Human Rights Council.

Panelists

Victims and survivors of human trafficking from different regions of the world trafficked for sexual exploitation, as well as for labour exploitation, both in peace time and in the context of armed conflict.

Format

A short video address on human trafficking will be shown.

This session will provide the opportunity for the victims and survivors of trafficking to make a 10 minute presentation about their experiences as trafficked persons and to present their views to the Human Rights Council on how to strengthen efforts to combat trafficking and protect and assist the victims.

Presentations by the panelists will be followed by an interactive discussion. Interactive discussion will be divided into two slots of 45 minutes each, as follows:

- 30 minutes for comments and questions by Member states, observer States of the Council as well as representatives from National Human Rights Institutions and civil society;
- 15 minutes for the panellists to answer questions and make comments.

Member States, national human rights institutions, international organizations and non-governmental organizations are encouraged to participate and make their contributions to the event, subject to the modalities and the practice of the Council. In particular, NGO coordination is strongly encouraged to maximize the use of time. The modalities of the panel are 3 minutes for the Member States and 2 minutes for Observers.

Outcome

To give a voice to the victims and survivors of trafficking and for their experiences and recommendations to be considered by the members of the Human Rights Council when devising strategies and actions to combat trafficking.

The international community and the High Commissioner have stressed the need for greater awareness of the nature of human trafficking and the need to apply a human rights-based approach in addressing trafficking, while placing the victim at the centre of all actions and strategies aimed at combating trafficking.

Background

The proposed panel of survivors will draw on this mandate to highlight the plight of survivors from around the world. The panel will be composed of survivors of different ages, sex, nationality and with different stories of hardship both in peace time and in the context of armed conflict, trafficked for sexual and for labour exploitation. In planning this event, the OHCHR considers the psychological well-being of the victims involved.

The Panel will be a powerful half day event in the official programme of the Human Rights Council. This is unique in itself. This is the first time that a trafficking event like this has been held in the Council as opposed to being a side-event.

The Human Rights Council resolution 11/3 on “Trafficking in persons, especially women and children” adopted in June 2009 affirms the protection of human rights as central to the measures to prevent and end human trafficking. This resolution welcomes the efforts of Governments, United Nations bodies and agencies and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to address trafficking in persons.

In this same resolution, the Human Rights Council requests the Office of the High Commissioner to organise a ‘two day seminar aimed at identifying opportunities and challenges in the development of rights-based responses to persons with a view to acknowledging emerging good practices and further promoting the practical application of the *Recommended Principles and Guidelines on Human Rights and Human Trafficking*’. This two day seminar is scheduled for the 27-28 May prior to the commencement of the June session of the Council.

An informal summary of the debate will be posted on the OHCHR website.