

Committee: The United Nations Human Rights Committee (UNHRC)

Topic: Addressing the Issue of Human Trafficking and Digital Exploitation in the Modern World



Theme of AUSMUN 2024

The theme for this year's AUSMUN is "Forging Tomorrow with Yesterday's Lessons". Dating back to 500 BC, great minds such as Confucius have spread this ideal: "Study the past, if you would divine the future". During a typical Model United Nations conference, delegates are expected to learn from their country's past and, in many cases, actively rewrite it. Historical knowledge when used effectively can lead to informed decisions; by reflecting on what has and has not worked in the past, collectively we are able to gain perspective on current and future policy. We encourage delegates to keep this ideal in mind while wrestling with the nuances and complications inherent in the ideas of modern day problems.

AUSMUN is committed to actively serving its community and combating pressing issues. As we continue to expand in numbers, we further seek to expand our positive impact on the world around us. We are proud to announce that we have partnered with Dress for Success, a non-profit organization that enables women to become economically independent by offering professional clothing, a network of support, and the resources necessary for both personal and professional growth. By participating in AUSMUN 2024, in addition to debating "model" policy, you are actively bettering society and changing the world.

The 2024 AUSMUN board is honored to host all delegates for our largest conference yet. We cannot wait to see what delegates bring forward to each committee in their efforts to embody values of collaboration and this year's theme. Looking twenty twenty-forward to seeing you!

Rationale

At any given time, over two million people are victims of human trafficking across the world (UNODC). Human trafficking is a form of modern-day slavery in which women, men, and children are forcibly exploited for labor or sexual acts. Human trafficking is a blatant violation of an individual's rights, and directly jeopardizes their wellbeing and safety. Unfortunately, human trafficking is only becoming an increasingly profitable crime, generating illegal trafficking groups around \$32 billion annually (UNODC). In Europe alone, \$3 billion is made off of human trafficking crimes each year (UNODC).

The spread of this inhumane practice is continuing at an alarming rate, partially due to how underrecognized it is. Human trafficking often goes completely unnoticed by everyday people, with victims and perpetrators frequently hiding in plain sight. Misconceptions about trafficking are rampant as many people believe that human trafficking is limited to only sexual acts. In reality, human trafficking pertains to a range of exploitations including forced labor and domestic servitude, both of which are often particularly difficult to detect (DHS). As leaders around the world have fallen victim to misconceptions about human trafficking, the issue has often gone inadequately or improperly addressed. This oversight has allowed human trafficking to expand and take root throughout the world, being reported in 127 countries (UNODC). As the

dangerous practice of human trafficking continues to spread, it is imperative that a collaborative and effective solution is reached.

Background of the Issue

Beginning in the early 1500s, the very first human trafficking began through the slave trade, predominantly in Europe. However, once abolitionist movements began to eliminate legal slavery in many countries, human trafficking began to more closely resemble modern-day operations. The switch from chattel slavery to illegal, underground human trafficking operations marked a new threat for vulnerable populations. UNODC defines human trafficking as the “recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of people through force, fraud or deception, with the aim of exploiting them for profit.” One of the first documented examples of human trafficking in a post-slavery world was the trafficking of Chinese immigrants into the U.S. in the 1800s. Chinese women were kidnapped or sold to gangs, who found loopholes to the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, in order to bring these women into the United States for work (Genthe). After entering the country, these women were forced into prostitution, a practice that would continue to flourish for decades (Genthe). In other areas of the world, increasing political concern arose following the rise of prostitution of female immigrants in Eastern Europe. This was deemed “white slavery” and became a controversial topic in global politics.

The 1920s saw a rebrand of human trafficking campaigns—changing the global concern to the trafficking of women and children. In 1921, the International Convention for the Suppression of Traffic in Women and Children was passed by 33 members of the League of Nations (UN Treaty Collections). Global legislation next addressed prostitution on a larger scale in 1949 when

the UN passed the 1949 United Nations Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Person and of the Prostitution of Others. This was the first major global legislation to prevent human trafficking. Despite this large step forward, in the modern day, only 66 countries have ratified it (United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner).

Contemporary Evidence

Human trafficking continues to be a detrimental issue in today's society. Currently, 4.5 million people throughout the world are victims of forced sexual exploitation (Dordulian). In fact, 58% of all trafficking activities include forced prostitution, sex slavery, and child sex rings (Britannica). This large-scale exploitation is typically led by large groups that oversee organized crime such as the MS-13 gang in the U.S., consisting of over 10,000 members. Sex trafficking, particularly involving children, has become increasingly common in recent decades with the growth of the internet. Social media has changed the face of human trafficking, making abduction far easier for predators. For as long as the internet has existed, online trafficking has as well. The National Human Trafficking Hotline has recorded recruitment in all types of sex and labor trafficking on social media platforms including Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Kik, Meetme.com, WhatsApp, and more (Polaris Project). Dating apps also have a large trafficking presence, with cases documented through Tinder, Grinder, and Plenty of Fish. As the online world has expanded, cyber trafficking has become increasingly prevalent. Oftentimes, people are abducted after unknowingly forming a relationship with a trafficker online. In fact, as of 2018, a startling 90 percent of human trafficking victims met their traffickers online (Survive and Thrive).

Debt bondage is another large part of human trafficking. Debt bondage is when someone is forced to pay off a loan by working for an often unclear period of time for little or no salary (International Organization of Migration). This work is typically grueling with labor that often far exceeds the worth of the initial loan. This form of exploitation is especially common in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal. In fact, the majority of the world's slaves live and work in India in a form of bonded labor (End Slavery Now).

As the online world becomes increasingly intertwined with everyday life, it is essential that countries prioritize the safety of online users. Unfortunately, these needed regulations are often found lacking, or even nonexistent. However, many governments have vowed to tackle the issue head on, applying many regulations such as the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) and United Nations Trafficking Protocol (UN TIP Protocol). These proactively address trafficking crimes, and over 175 countries have adopted the UN TIP Protocol. Although these are momentous steps forward, much more is needed to make a significant impact.

Directive

The increase in human trafficking across the world and its detrimental impact on human rights make this a crucial issue to be addressed by the UNHCR Council. Considering the sensitivity of the subject at hand, delegates should proceed with empathy. Recognizing the urgency of the issue, all delegates are encouraged to work together to form effective and timely solutions. Delegates should consider the following questions while preparing to debate:

1. How has human trafficking impacted your delegation and what measures have they taken to combat it?

2. How can international cooperation facilitate a reduction in illegal trafficking?
3. How can citizens be educated to better recognize and report instances of possible human trafficking?
4. How has increased online activity internationally led to higher levels of exploitation?
5. What regulations can be put in place on digital platforms to protect online users from human trafficking?
6. How can all types of human trafficking, including sexual exploitation, digital exploitation, forced laboring, and organ harvesting be addressed by the United Nations in this debate?

Resources for Delegates

[UNODC Human Trafficking](#)

[Global Report on Trafficking](#)

[Global Human Trafficking](#)

[Human Trafficking Prevention](#)

[Global Initiative on Human Trafficking](#)

Delegations

1. **Afghanistan-** While Afghanistan has made efforts to combat human trafficking such as joining the UNODC in a global initiative to address human trafficking and training government officials to prosecute human traffickers through the national child protection

committee, human trafficking levels still remain exceptionally high. Due to these injustices and others, the US Department of State declared Afghanistan at a tier 3 on the Human Trafficking Index, and large scale sanctions being have been placed on the country.

[Afghanistan - United States Department of State](#)

[Human Trafficking in Afghanistan - The Borgen Project](#)

- 2. Armenia-** The nation of Armenia has struggled deeply with the issue of human trafficking, but has joined numerous international treaties and has created legislation aimed at combating the issue. Examples of this include the establishment of the Victim Identification Committee (VIC) that assists in tracking victims of human trafficking through migratory flows. While enacting legislation has been a large step in combating Armenia's human trafficking issue, the next problem falls in enforcing this legislation, as Armenia has struggled to adequately prosecute human traffickers in criminal courts thus far.

[Armenia - United States Department of State](#)

[Armenia: despite legislative reforms, survivors of human trafficking face uphill struggle to access justice - Portal \(coe.int\)](#)

- 3. Austria-** Austria has made many legislative and persecutory strides to eliminate human trafficking within its nation. However, Austria does serve as a "transit country" where those trafficked in other areas are brought through the country, the majority of these transits being women who are sexually exploited.

[Armenia: despite legislative reforms, survivors of human trafficking face uphill struggle to access justice - Portal \(coe.int\)](#)

[Austria - United States Department of State](#)

- 4. Canada-** Canada has put forth a highly successful five year plan to reduce human trafficking within its nation. Canada also has many services in place that assist victims of human trafficking following the incidents. The government does not, however, adequately investigate the cases of human trafficking in many instances, with there being an international call for Canada to increase its investigative services related to human trafficking.

[National Strategy To Combat Human Trafficking 2019-2024 \(publicsafety.gc.ca\)](#)

[Progress and Achievements: Combatting Human Trafficking - Canada.ca](#)

- 5. China-** China deeply struggles with the issue of human trafficking, having government sponsored forced labor that falls within the international categorization of human trafficking. The government has placed members of the Muslim religion throughout the country into forced labor camps and does not have systems in place to find and capture smugglers either for issues of child trafficking or sexual exploitation.

[China - United States Department of State](#)

[CECC Annual Report 2021](#)

- 6. Colombia-** Colombia has a higher than average rate of both sex trafficking and forced labor. Many women are taken and forced into brothels, with others being exploited and

being forced into being “webcam models” for money. Many in Colombia are also smuggled and taken for organ harvesting purposes. The government has struggled to adequately combat these problems, with large smuggling rings being exceptionally difficult to track. However, the government has taken large strides to address the issue, using computer algorithms to identify traffickers and victims.

[Colombia - United States Department of State](#)

[Human Trafficking in Colombia - The Exodus Road](#)

- 7. Costa Rica-** The nation of Costa Rica is making attempts to eliminate trafficking, but it still runs rampant within the nation. There is a large market for sexual services in the tourism industry, leading to the abduction of mostly young women and girls to fill the demand in prostitution rings. Many are moved from Asian and African countries into Costa Rica, and the government has not done much to prevent this inflow of trafficked people. Many migrants leaving other nations such as Nicaragua are taken and trafficked into these prostitution rings.

[Costa Rica - United States Department of State](#)

[Criminality in Costa Rica - The Organized Crime Index \(ocindex.net\)](#)

- 8. Denmark-** Denmark struggles with human trafficking much more than other more developed countries. The Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA) has pleaded for Denmark to improve its persecution and investigation of trafficking, as it remains a destination for victims of trafficking to be taken across Europe. Many of their practices discriminate against illegal immigrants instead of

combating the problem of trafficking, leading to many being afraid to come out with their stories or often falling victim to re-trafficking.

[Denmark - United States Department of State](#)

[Human trafficking: despite progress, Denmark still fails to sufficiently protect victims - Portal \(coe.int\)](#)

- 9. Egypt-** Egypt has struggled with human trafficking over the past few decades, introducing new legislation such as the 2016-2021 National Strategy for Combating and Preventing Trafficking in Persons and approving the 2022-2026 National Strategy on Combating and Preventing Trafficking in Persons Act. Despite steps forward, the country has faced backlash over its penalizing of victims and for not holding accused traffickers properly accountable. The sale of children and women is especially prevalent in impoverished communities in Egypt and poses a major safety risk. However, Egypt is focused on improving current legislation and increasing public safety to prevent human trafficking.

[2023 Trafficking in Persons Report: Egypt](#)

[Tackling Human Trafficking In Egypt - The Borgen Project](#)

- 10. France-** France has made many legal moves in an attempt to solve the issue of human trafficking at both a national and international level, voicing their support for human trafficking victims through the implementation of An Interministerial Mission for the Protection of Women against Violence and the Fight against Trafficking in Human Beings (MIPROF) in 2013. France currently struggles to ensure the safety of migrant

children currently entering the country as refugees and has failed to sort data regarding human trafficking reports properly.

[2023 Trafficking in Persons Report: France](#)

[Fight against human trafficking - Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs](#)

11. Iceland- Iceland has recently seen an increase in human trafficking reports, linked to organized crime groups based out of the Middle East and Southeastern Europe. These groups run complex sex trafficking rings and target women and children within the country. Additionally, Iceland has seen an increase in human trafficking manipulation of state asylum systems. The majority of these crimes within Iceland are seen in migrant populations, which are notably susceptible to trafficking. Iceland is known as both a destination for victims and a transport zone. Iceland has introduced legislation to address trafficking, without much avail.

[2023 Trafficking in Persons Report: Iceland.](#)

[GRETA publishes its third report on Iceland - Action against Trafficking in Human Beings](#)

12. India- The majority of the human trafficking witnessed in India is for the purpose of labor exploitation; traffickers often target young women and girls, and alarmingly, 62% of those affected by modern-day slavery live in South Asia. The country struggles to properly address this illicit trafficking on a large, legal scale and has witnessed extremely high rates of trafficking for children. Human trafficking victims are often trapped in an endless cycle of poverty and debt.

[Human Trafficking in India - The Exodus Road](#)

[2023 Trafficking in Persons Report: India](#)

13. Ireland- Ireland has made major steps towards eliminating human trafficking within the country. Unlike other European nations, Ireland has made significant progress to protect their immigrant populations, allowing trafficking victims a 60 day stay in the country regardless of if they have legal status to remain within Ireland or not. Ireland is committed to ending human trafficking on a global scale and has proved to be extremely cooperative. Additionally, the country has been proactive in raising money and awareness to mitigate the issue.

[2023 Trafficking in Persons Report: Ireland](#)

[Human trafficking - Department of Foreign Affairs](#)

14. Israel- Israel is currently facing a multitude of issues regarding human trafficking within the country. Israel has enacted several laws to properly punish human traffickers, but still sees issues within the country. During an era of escalating tension and violence with Hamas, Israel has been committed to ending human trafficking as a result of the war. The country has worked hard to free hostages after the October 7th attacks, but also faces many accusations of human trafficking of Palestinians. The complex and nuanced topic of human trafficking as it relates to the Israel-Palestine conflict must be addressed with extreme care.

[Coordination of the Fight against Trafficking of Human Beings](#)

[2023 Trafficking in Persons Report: Israel, West Bank and Gaza.](#)

15. Japan- Japan has been recognized as a major destination and area of transit for human trafficking victims. Men and women alike are victimized by complex schemes resulting in forced labor and sexual exploitation. The country has done little to solve the issue, apart from the general criminalization of abuse and exploitative practices. Children are often specifically targeted within Japan, and the trafficking of women from less developed Asian countries such as the Philippines has reportedly increased in the last few years and resulted in fraudulent documents and abusive labor practices.

[Trafficking of Filipino Women to Japan: Examining the Experiences and Perspectives of Victims and Government Experts](#)

[2023 Trafficking in Persons Report: Japan.](#)

16. Laos- With the opening of a state-run Anti-Trafficking Department and increased investigations into high-trafficking Special Economic Zones, Laos has begun to effectively take steps to fight human trafficking. However, even though there are government programs combating this crime, awareness has not been spread effectively as the citizens of Laos have been reported to not understand the high number of trafficking victims in the country.

[2023 Trafficking in Persons Report: Laos](#)

[Human Trafficking in Laos – S E N G S A V A N G](#)

17. Liberia- Human trafficking within Liberia has increased significantly in recent years, jumping from 34 to 154 identified trafficking victims between 2022 and 2023, with many

more going unidentified. Trafficking has taken advantage of Liberian's job loss and vulnerability due to the COVID-19 pandemic, as many are desperate for work. In many cases, women are lured out of Liberia by fake job offers and exploited for sexual or domestic labor. Liberia has been working with many other countries, such as the United States and has been receiving much-needed support to help manage the human trafficking crisis.

[3 Ways USAID is Combating Human Trafficking in Liberia](#)

[Making strides to combat trafficking in persons in Liberia](#)

18. Mexico- Human trafficking is a major issue and disproportionately affects asylum-seekers, migrants, internally displaced persons, and children located in high crime and gang associated areas. Children are at a high risk for sex trafficking in Mexico compared to other countries, and frequently family members are involved in the trafficking of their own children. Mexico also reports high amounts of online trafficking, with more than 60% of trafficked victims reporting that they were exploited from websites and online "job" offers. Mexico has been working with many NGOs and other international governments to help prevent the issue within its own borders and throughout the world and would be in favor of working with allies to put an end to trafficking.

[2023 Trafficking in Persons Report: Mexico.](#)

[Deadly human smuggling through Mexico thrives in 'perfect cycle of impunity'](#)

19. Mongolia- Trafficking in Mongolia is very common, the most frequent kind being the exploitation of both women and young girls by way of sex trafficking and forced

prostitution in hotels, brothels, and massage parlors or by overall child labor. To combat this issue, the Mongolian government has revised outdated legislation surrounding trafficking sentences, increasing sentences related to children to a minimum of 12 years and overall increasing trafficking related sentences significantly. Additionally, the government has put new safety regulations into place once victims are identified and have been training many government workers in proper victim identification. They are also spreading awareness of what trafficking really looks like.

[2023 Trafficking in Persons Report: Mongolia](#)

[Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor - Mongolia](#)

20. Nepal- Nepal is home to high levels of human trafficking. However it tends to disproportionately affect many indigenous groups and workers in the agricultural sector. The most common form of trafficking within Nepal is debt-based bondage and forced labor within agriculture and other domestic work such as textile weaving. Around 87% of all forced child labor within Nepal is based in the agricultural sector. Additionally, many traffickers in Nepal bring Indian child workers to perform forced agricultural labor in Nepal by way of the open India-Pakistan border. The government has been working with NGOs to create databases, new regulations to identify victims, media to spread awareness and a hotline, and updated labor migration laws to prevent illegal trafficking. However, these efforts are not enough and Nepal may be in need of international aid to help solve this issue.

[Trafficking in Persons Report: Nepal.](#)

[A Glimpse into Nepal's Child Trafficking Crisis](#)

21. New Zealand- While human trafficking is present in New Zealand, it is at a much lower level than many other countries who face severe trafficking crises. 51 victims of human trafficking have been identified since 2015, but the real estimate is around 3,000. The major prosecutions regarding trafficking in New Zealand have all surrounded people bringing in migrants from nearby countries to exploit their labor. In New Zealand, this crime is punishable by up to a 20 year prison sentence or a \$500,000 fine. The government has put in place a prevention act called the “Plan of Action” and has been cooperating with other countries in the Indo-Pacific region to help end this issue within the region.

[People Trafficking | Immigration New Zealand](#)

[2023 Trafficking in Persons Report: New Zealand](#)

22. Nigeria- Nigeria is home to a vast amount of human trafficking, the most frequent being the exploitation of people living in rural areas by forcing them to move to larger port cities for the purpose of sex trafficking or forced labor. Due to the effects of extreme poverty, economic insecurity, and corruption within Nigeria, Nigerians are much more vulnerable to being trafficked. The government has established policies to prevent this crime from occurring, such as creating a government-monitored hotline, funding investigations, making a task-force to specialize in prosecution of this crime and even working with local organizations to raise awareness about the issue. The government has even been working with the military by giving them operations to investigate common high-trafficking areas within the country.

[2023 Trafficking in Persons Report: Nigeria.](#)

[Nigeria: Human Trafficking Factsheet](#)

23. Russia - Human trafficking is very common in Russia, especially labor trafficking.

Exploitation is extremely common with both Russian citizens and foreigners. Russia does not prioritize ending forced labor and the government has neither a designated lead agency to coordinate its anti-trafficking efforts nor a body to monitor its anti-trafficking activities (US Department of State). The Russian Ukrainian war has caused a significant increase in human trafficking in Russia as many refugees fleeing the violence are caught and exploited. It has also been said that Russian troops are using sexual violence as a weapon of war in Ukraine.

[2023 Trafficking in Persons Report: Russia.](#)

[Russia's War Has Created a Human Trafficking Crisis, Says U.N. Envoy | United States Institute of Peace](#)

24. Serbia - Sex trafficking is extremely common in Serbia, often in the form of forced marriage and child marriage. However, Serbia is taking steps to improve the state of human rights violations by trying to eliminate child labor. Serbia's Center for the Protection of Trafficking Victims has implemented training for educators, healthcare workers, and other professionals on identifying potential victims of human trafficking. Serbia also established the 2022 Plan to Protect Street Children in Situations of Violence, Neglect, and Exploitation along with eradicating harmful street labor. The government

gave \$240,080 to the Center for Protection of Trafficking Victims (CPTV) and the Urgent Reception Center (URC).

[Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor - Serbia](#)

[Human Trafficking in Serbia - The Borgen Project](#)

25. Singapore - Singapore is a part of the UN TIP protocol and human trafficking is criminalized under the Prevention of Human Trafficking Act of 2014 (PHTA). Since the enactment of these laws, many have been held accountable for and convicted for their crimes. Singapore focuses on eliminating trafficking in persons through four steps: prevention, prosecution, protection, and partnership. There is also a TIP Public Awareness Grant that is aimed at creating public education initiatives that would help raise awareness of human trafficking crimes. Although Singapore is facing this issue head on, citizens still are forced into sex trafficking and labor, especially women and children.

[About Human Trafficking.](#)

[Singapore Inter-Agency Taskforce on Trafficking in Persons](#)

26. South Africa - Many cases of human trafficking in South Africa have been discovered, and recently a bus carrying 400 young children from Zimbabwe was intercepted. This was said to be a trafficking operation, but the case is still under investigation. South Africa acknowledges human trafficking as an issue despite the little data on the presence of human trafficking in the country. Even with these data gaps, the South African government created the Prevention and Combating of Trafficking in Persons Act 7 in 2013.

[South Africa intercepts buses carrying more than 400 unaccompanied children from Zimbabwe | Africanews](#)

[South Africa: human trafficking tier ranking 2023 | Statista.](#)

27. Sweden- The rate of known trafficking in persons cases has been steadily increasing since 2018 in Sweden. Sex trafficking is the most common, forced labor is another prevalent issue in the country. Sweden is taking a proactive approach to ending it. In 1997, Sweden was the first country in the European Union to appoint an independent National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Human Beings (European Commission). The National Unit Against Organized Crime also has a role in preventing human trafficking as they monitor cross border crime and consistently catch cases of human trafficking and drug crimes.

[GRETA publishes its third report on Sweden - Action against Trafficking in Human Beings.](#)

[Sweden - European Commission](#)

28. United Kingdom - Sex trafficking in the UK is extremely common and many professions, such as prostitution, phone sex lines, and escort agencies, have profited from it. Many woman are smuggled into the UK and forced into sex work in London or its surrounding areas. In response to this, the United Kingdom participates in many anti-human trafficking programs, including the Modern Slavery Act. The United Kingdom also works with many NGOs, like Anti-Slavery International and EPACK UK,

that combat human trafficking. Additionally, the UK has increased the sentence length for human trafficking, acknowledging it as a very significant crime.

[2022 Trafficking in Persons Report: United Kingdom](#)

[Modern slavery and human trafficking: identifying and reporting perpetrators - GOV.UK](#)

29. United States - Human trafficking occurs in the US but is extremely regulated by the government and consistently addressed. The government continues to prosecute human trafficking, as outlined in the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA), which criminalizes sex and labor trafficking. TVPA also applies strict guidelines for prosecution and punishment can encompass up to a lifetime in prison. Additionally, the TVPA allocates funds to federal labor trafficking investigations, limiting traffickers ability to use bankruptcy and extending survivor counseling. In the United States, there is a National Human Trafficking Hotline where instances of human trafficking can be anonymously reported.

[2023 Trafficking in Persons Report: United States](#)

[National Statistics](#)

30. Vietnam - Human trafficking is prevalent in Vietnam, and it is common for women and children to be trafficked to China, Cambodia, Thailand, the Republic of Korea, Malaysia, Taiwan, and Macau for sexual exploitation. The government has established child-centered investigative policies alongside anti-trafficking legislation. Additionally, Vietnam launched four National Action Programs against Trafficking. The Government of Vietnam does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking

but is making significant efforts to do so. Especially during Covid, Vietnam improved their laws surrounding trafficking.

[Open Ji Careport: Vietnam](#)

[2023 Trafficking in Persons Report: Vietnam](#)

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