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Israel

Delivered by Ms. Dina Dominitz,
National anti-trafficking Coordinator

My name is Dina Dominitz and for the past 2 years, I am the national anti-trafficking coordinator and head of the coordination unit in the ministry of Justice.

I first became active in combatting human trafficking, as a young legal advisor working in the Ministry of the Interior, in the beginning of the 2000's, which was the formative period of Israel's struggle against this abhorrent global plague. From 2007, I continued to be involved in protecting human rights of the weakest echelons in society, as a senior state attorney in the civil department, forming policy on the welfare and best interests of minors, and representing the state in precedential cases in the Israeli Supreme Court.

The coordination unit that I lead today, was established in 2006 in a governmental resolution, which also stated that its role would be to coordinate between government agencies, and between them and non-governmental organizations – in order to promote the efforts against human trafficking. Indeed, this unit serves as a bridge between all the different players and I believe that these collaborations have proven themselves over time as crucial to the progress we have seen in the field.

The Bible tells us that thousands of years ago, the Israelite people were slaves in Egypt. After hundreds of years of servitude, we were emancipated and gained our freedom.

But with this freedom came the eternal obligation to remember the slavery we experienced. For Israel, internalizing the slavery of our past, informs and shapes our efforts and aim to end human trafficking and all forms of modern slavery.

Over more than a decade of combatting trafficking in persons in Israel, we have reached significant and outstanding achievements – especially the dramatic decrease to full eradication of the severe form of trafficking in women for the purpose of prostitution that was prevalent in Israel during the previous decade. The international community has recognized this remarkable progress, thus, for example, Israel has been ranked this year in tier 1 in the U.S. state department annual TIP report, for the 6th year running.

These real accomplishments are due to the determined and consistent action of the government: Amending a comprehensive anti-trafficking legislation, establishing the National Anti-Trafficking Unit, a Directors Generals steering Committee on Human Trafficking and developing National Plans to battle trafficking in persons for the purpose of prostitution, labor, slavery, organs and others. This, together with strong collaborations forged between the government and the civil society and NGOs, and the

International bodies and global communities, have lead us to the development of advanced mechanisms and best practices, some of which I will share with you today.

The GOI is a leading voice in global efforts to combat this heinous phenomenon and we share our knowledge and experience in this field, both internationally and domestically.

In 2016 the Unit hosted 2 study visits to Israel - from Albania, on compensation for trafficking victims and from Moldova, on organ trafficking. Recently NATU hosted a federal delegation from California focusing on combatting labor and sex trafficking, particularly in minors, in a victim centered approach. The MFA and my Unit conduct bi-annual international seminars for judges on the Judiciary's role, in cooperation with various international organizations including the OSCE, UNODC, IOM and the U.S. government.

- Israel has ratified the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and two main protocols dealing with trafficking: The Optional Protocol to the convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and children. In addition, Israel has ratified ILO Conventions n. 29 and 105 and regularly reports to the ILO on their implementation.
- In response to the advance questions from the UK, Israel has recently commenced a process to examine the possible ratification of the ILO 2014 Protocol n 29 to the Forced Labour Convention, 1930, and supports the UK's Call to Action to End Forced Labour, Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking. Furthermore, Israel is currently finalizing the internal process leading to joining the European Council Convention on Human trafficking.

Israel continues to vigorously uphold the principles of the Palermo Protocol, in the fields of Prevention, Protection and Prosecution, and is constantly striving to forge new partnerships to enhance the tools of combatting trafficking in persons.

In recent years we have initiated partnerships in the Business sector, focusing on preventing trafficking and slavery in supply chains and public procurement; and with the Tourism industry, aiming at eliminating the abuse of tourist facilities for commercial sexual exploitation, particularly of minors.

We have seen inspiring initiatives to involve religious leaders in Israel, and indeed important religious leaders – of Islam, Christianity and Judaism – have issued joint statements against modern slavery, and a call to end it. Such statements are particularly powerful when they come out of the "Holy Land" - Holy to so many people around the world.

We are also enhancing our efforts to address new patterns of trafficking we are witnessing.

As for protection of victims, Israel was one of the first countries worldwide to establish a state funded and supervised shelter for victims of trafficking in 2004.

Every victim of trafficking in Israel receives a rehabilitation year in a shelter, supplemented by a stay and work visa, medical, psychiatric and psychological care, and state-funded legal aid .

This is the place where humanity is being restored to people who had been treated as objects, and it is done with much thought and sensitivity.

In 2017, 50 women with 12 children, and 72 men, who were recognised as victims of trafficking and slavery, resided in the shelter and halfway apartments. Over 200 victims received assistance in the special state funded day centre for victims of trafficking.

Another important milestone was reached in 2016, with the operation of the special forfeiture fund. The Forfeited property and fines from trafficking and slavery offenses are deposited in the fund and dedicated to various causes in combating TIP – with a special emphasis on victim protection and compensation. Institutions, government bodies and NGOs may apply for funds, as well as – uniquely – victims of the offences.

In the field of prevention:

We find that one of the crucial ways of preventing TIP is by maintaining full awareness of the phenomena and conducting training sessions for different officials. Accordingly, we encourage and support training sessions, for a variety of government officials, including prosecutors, labor inspector's, social workers, judges, as well as raising awareness of the wider public.

Israel has found that one of the most effective mechanisms in preventing trafficking and slavery in the labor field, is the promotion of bilateral recruitment agreements of foreign workers, that eliminate exorbitant and illegal brokerage fees, and protect the workers on arrival through a state funded hotline that operates 24/7 in origin countries languages. Currently the GOI is engaged in 9 bilateral agreements in the fields of construction, agriculture and caregiving.

In the field of prosecution:

As mentioned, Israel has a comprehensive anti-trafficking law from 2006, that establishes an offence of trafficking in human beings for a wide array of exploitative purposes, and when an offence is committed against a minor, the law dictates a heavier punishment reflecting the extreme severity of such actions against minors.

Several groundbreaking judicial decisions, including convictions in slavery, labor and sex trafficking, organ trafficking, trafficking a minor for purposes of producing pornographic materials and slavery in a constellation of a pseudo-family cult setting - manifest Israel's strong commitment to eliminating trafficking in persons.

To conclude:

Human trafficking exists in all our countries. It binds us in the worst of ways.

We must not allow its complexity to overwhelm us in our quest to defeat it. By continuing to combine our collective willpower, we can, and we will find a solution, working together to attain our joint goals.

I would like to end with a quote former Chief Justice Dorit Beinisch from the Israel Supreme Court: "Gone are the dark days, in which one person could be viewed as the property of another person. A human being is born free, and his right to liberty is a fundamental human right". (Criminal Appeal 11196/02 Michael Prudental v. The State of Israel).

Thank you