



**Statement by Mr. A. Gopinathan, Deputy Permanent  
Representative of India, at the UNICEF Executive Board on  
Trafficking in Children on January 20, 2004**

Mr. President,

We thank the Chief of Division and her colleagues for their informative presentations and clarifications. The discussion so far makes it abundantly clear that trafficking in children is an extremely complex problem and poses enormous challenges and difficulties.

At the outset, it must be recognised that the primary onus for dealing with the question of trafficking in children lies with national governments. The international community can play a supportive and facilitating role. This can be done at two levels. At one level, this involves strengthening of the international standards and bringing into force more legally-binding instruments such as the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Optional Protocol to the Convention on Transnational Organised Crime on trafficking in humans and the ILO Convention no. 182 on the most exploitative forms of child labour. Colleagues from Nepal and Bangladesh have already referred to efforts under way in the SAARC region.

At the second level, the international community, both the donors and organisations such as the UN, can contribute by helping States in capacity-building and in providing financial and technical assistance in putting in place the administrative and legal framework, institutional reforms and training in specific areas.

Mr. President,

We would like to take this opportunity to deal with some of the comments which have been made by other delegations. There was a reference by one delegation that further actions are contemplated through the Security Council. We would like to sound a note of caution here. The Security Council can play a role, in our view, only when trafficking in children in a specific case can be seen, and has been determined, to threaten the maintenance of international peace and security. Otherwise, this is an area that is best handled by bodies of the UN system other than Security Council.

Another delegation referred to similarity between trafficking in children and trafficking in other areas. It is interesting to note in this connection that the attitude of the international community towards trafficking in children is closer to that towards trafficking in narcotics and somewhat opposite of that to trafficking in arms. There is inadequate attention paid to demand reduction, as demonstrated by the reluctance to focus on areas such as paedophilia and child-sex tourism.

The Chief of Division in her explanation said that economic growth for a major developing country had the effect of attracting traffickers from neighbouring countries. We trust that she is not advocating that developing countries should not register rapid economic growth as it would lead to increase in trafficking of children. It is important to make sure that remedies being suggested do not work against the long-term interests of the developing countries.

Mr. President,

We would like to caution against two more areas. One is that of public advocacy by UNICEF which does not always lead to effective results. The second is the area of duplication and overlap as different UN agencies compete with each other in order to deal with the question of trafficking in children. We would emphasise the need for greater coordination and optimal use of resources by the UN system, including by UNICEF.

The success of any strategy will need to be measured by the success achieved in rescue, rehabilitation and re-integration of the trafficked children. Here socio-cultural factors and traditions in each society play an important role.

Mr. President,

In conclusion, we would like to recall the thought contained in the introductory statement of Mrs. Mehr Khan, Regional Director, East Asia and Pacific Region, when she said that incomplete education can exacerbate the problem. Any solution that we devise should not exacerbate the problem and not push the victims into situations of greater deprivation and poverty.

Thank you, Mr. President.

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