

HRC27 Rights of Older Persons and Contemporary Slavery

Statements by Concerned Countries

Kazakhstan, speaking as a concerned country, said that concrete measures taken to improve its existing legislation and aligning it with international standards had taken the form of the following steps: in fighting human trafficking, it had revised the criminal code with a law of 4 July 2013, the issue of reparations was being examined at the legislative level, and the Government plan of action 2015-2017 included public aid – financial and other - being made available to non-governmental organizations who helped victims of human trafficking was now available; in fighting forced labour, specifically in the tobacco and cotton industries, regular spot checks were being carried out in order to detect such cases, including cases of child labour. A national campaign would be held annually from 1 to 12 June to raise the awareness of the population about child labour. Kazakhstan was also considering the possibility of acceding to the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families.

Mauritania, speaking as a concerned country, said the establishment of the national agency to fight the consequences of slavery was a sign of the will of the State authorities to resolutely tackle the issue of slavery, which was caused by the persistence of poverty, and establish an institutional tool. The agency had started to implement an ambitious programme. The national agency had the capacity to institute civil proceedings. There was special legislation dealing with hearing specific cases related to slavery. Special training would also be provided to judges on fighting contemporary forms of slavery. Concerning the roadmap, a workshop was being organized to launch the plan of action to implement the roadmap by the Human Rights and Humanitarian Action Commission and the United Nations Office of the High Commission for Human Rights, and an inter-ministerial committee led by the Prime Minister had been put in place. A commission had also been created to start work on the revision of the 2007 law on slavery.

National Human Rights Commission of Mauritania said that slavery had been officially abolished in 1981. In 2007, another law had been passed which criminalized slavery, and in 2013, slavery had been established as a crime against humanity in keeping with the Constitution. Several recommendations had been made to increase the effectiveness of the fight against slavery. The Commission recommended that a judicial institution to look into cases of slavery should be set up rapidly.

Ghana, speaking as a concerned country, said it continued to take steps to implement measures outlined in the report of the Special Rapporteur. In cooperation with civil society and victim support groups, the police and justice sector was addressing slavery-like practices and trafficking in persons. Ghana was making steady progress in tackling the root causes of contemporary forms of slavery, including through poverty reduction, increasing access to free and universal education and balancing out regional disparities in development. Ghana remained committed to honouring its responsibilities as a State party to various international treaties including on combating contemporary forms of slavery, trafficking in persons, and torture and other cruel and degrading treatment. -

Interactive Debate

Costa Rica, speaking on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, urged the Independent Expert to adopt an inclusive approach in the realization of her mandate, while Pakistan, speaking on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, hoped that she would work in close

cooperation with the Open-Ended Group on Aging and avoid duplication of work. All States were encouraged to take concrete action domestically to ensure the protection of the human rights of older persons. United Arab Emirates, speaking on behalf of the Arab Group, said that the aging of the population was a global issue that needed to be included in the post-2015 development agenda, and insisted that the Madrid and Vienna Action Plans had to be implemented. European Union underlined that this was a very relevant and important issue in Europe, and asked the Independent Expert how adequate investments in healthcare services could improve the situation of older persons. Spain stressed that international instruments protecting the rights of older persons had to be better implemented, while Austria asked whether the Independent Expert would address the multiple forms of discrimination against older persons in her mandate.

Costa Rica, speaking on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, spoke about the scope of the International Labour Organization's recommendation to supplement the Forced Labour Convention, a modern instrument it considered balanced. The region expressed its confidence in the role of the Special Rapporteur in the common effort to sustainably eradicate forced labour. Pakistan, speaking on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, said progress on eradicating the various forms of slavery and exploitation could only be achieved by addressing the root causes that sustained those practices, including poverty, exploitation by business enterprises, regional disparities and lack of access to livelihoods, education and healthcare. European Union asked the Special Rapporteur two questions; how did she intend to work with relevant international actors such as the International Labour Organization, and how would she engage with civil society? Spain underlined the important role played by local civil society in the fight against contemporary forms of slavery and asked whether the Special Rapporteur foresaw any challenges in its engagement with them.

Iceland said slavery remained a persistent phenomenon affecting all regions and most countries; the mandate of the Special Rapporteur was essential to prevent it. There were clear links between child marriage and slavery; Iceland called for a coherent global response. India said poverty, illiteracy and lack of development were among the root causes of contemporary forms of slavery, and asked the Special Rapporteur to put more emphasis on the underlying causes. The issue of ageing populations was one of the most pressing challenges worldwide: India had 100 million older persons, a number expected to double within the next 20 years. Sierra Leone said ageing was not synonymous with health problems; in Africa where age was linked to wisdom and experience, older persons played a critical role in conflict negotiation, and in teaching of children, contributing to the future generations. Internally displaced persons were especially vulnerable to contemporary forms of slavery, and Sierra Leone was especially concerned about child labourers, especially those in bonded labour.

Qatar said older persons enjoyed special attention in Qatar, based on religious customs, and enjoyed special respect and care, as also enshrined in the constitution. The State provided several services through various institutions including social security, housing, legal care and healthcare. Brazil said the advancement of negotiations on an international convention on the rights of older persons was of utmost importance, and asked the Special Rapporteur about her vision on that. Brazil believed public policy should focus on prevention, not only enforcement, of legislation against domestic servitude, forced labour and other contemporary forms of slavery. Mexico said States had to guarantee the rights of older persons; there was a lack of legislation and policies for and recognition of obligations towards them. Mexico believed establishing social and health policies could be the basis of such a guarantee.

With regard to the social rights of older persons, Israel said it was developing a plan on dementia to train health workers and ease the burden on families and caregivers. Migrant workers in Qatar and other

Arab Gulf countries were still abused and exploited and Israel asked the Special Rapporteur if she intended to visit the region. Burkina Faso said it was strengthening the legal framework to protect the rights of elderly persons and would continue to work toward the better protection of their rights. The situation of vulnerabilities of the elderly in developing countries did not differ from those in developed ones, said El Salvador and called for strengthening of the Madrid agreement and the promotion of an international instrument to ensure their full enjoyment of human rights.

Venezuela agreed on the need for a comprehensive view on aging, as well as on the need to create public institutions and establish social services to guarantee rights of elderly. Venezuela noted with concern the role of transnational corporations in forced labour and encouraged the Special Rapporteur to further explore this issue. Indonesia suggested to streamline the thematic priorities of the Independent Expert and reiterated its commitment to protecting the rights of domestic workers through strengthening of its legal framework, including through the ratification of the International Labour Organization Convention on the rights of domestic workers.