
Title: Report of the Special Rapporteur on trafficking, especially of women and children.

Mr President,

I welcome the opportunity to present this statement in response to the report of the Special Rapporteur on trafficking, especially of women and children. I make this statement in the name of the Equality and Human Rights Commission and the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission, a status national human rights institutions of the United Kingdom.

We welcome the Special Rapporteur's report and would like to bring to the Human Rights Council's attention a number of issues we are examining in the UK, in particular in relation to implementation of the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

Our recent submissions to the Committee on the Rights of the Child included four priorities that are relevant across the UK, and are consistent with the conclusions of the Special Rapporteur.

The Commissions welcome recent efforts to improve the legislative framework on trafficking within the UK, through the draft Modern Slavery Bill (applicable to England and Wales), the draft Human Trafficking and Exploitation Bill (applicable to Northern Ireland) and forthcoming legislation in Scotland. However, we believe improvements should be made to the draft legislation to ensure it meets international standards, and would encourage the UK, Scottish and Northern Irish governments to work together to develop and implement victim-centred strategies, such as the one included in Scotland's National Action Plan for Human Rights.

We would like to add three further points. First, the Commissions emphasise the importance of aligning the domestic definition of human trafficking more closely with the international definition.

Secondly, the Commissions welcome, in principle, the proposal in the Draft Modern Slavery Bill to establish an Anti-Slavery Commissioner, in compliance with the EU Directive. The Commissioner should be provided with sufficient, statutory independence, and the powers and resources to effectively fulfil his or her role.

Thirdly, we believe the draft Modern Slavery Bill and the forthcoming legislation in Scotland should include additional measures to protect child victims of trafficking adequately, for example by providing an independent guardian to unaccompanied minors who are identified as potential victims of trafficking. The draft Human Trafficking and Exploitation Bill currently provides for such a guardian and, subject to amendments ensuring his or her independence, we believe this provision should remain in the final legislation.

Finally, we believe improvements should be made to data collection and analysis to help to establish the true extent of trafficking in the UK; and to improve early identification of cases to enable the state to fulfil its positive obligations to investigate and enforce the law.

Thank you, Mr President.