



Ukraine: Armed conflict and displacement heightens risks of all forms of sexual violence including trafficking in persons, say UN experts

Press Statement: For Immediate Release

GENEVA/NEW YORK (16 March 2022) – The UN Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, Ms. Siobhán Mullally, the UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, Ms. Reem Alsalem, and the United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Pramila Patten, today expressed serious concerns at the heightened risks of sexual violence, especially trafficking in persons, impacting significantly women and children fleeing the conflict in Ukraine and forcibly displaced. They issued the following statement:

“With more than 2 million people, mostly women and children already displaced from Ukraine, it is critical to ensure that effective prevention and protection systems are in place in transit and destination countries and at all border crossings. Expanding and ensuring access to international protection, resettlement, humanitarian visas and family reunification, will reduce the risks of trafficking. The chaos and trauma resulting from the war, is increasing vulnerability to various forms of sexual violence including trafficking and exploitation.

The application of the Temporary Protective Directive by the European Union is welcome. We must ensure that it is implemented effectively, without discrimination, and that the protection afforded is available in practice to all those in need. We call on other States to urgently provide expanded access to international protection and safe migration routes to those displaced from war in Ukraine and to their families.

We are very concerned at the heightened vulnerability of children separated from families and caregivers. Urgent action is required to ensure effective international cooperation to identify and trace missing children, recognising that they may be victims of trafficking or at risk of trafficking and sexual violence.

Resourcing of child protection systems, timely appointment of guardians for unaccompanied and separated children, access to safe accommodation, assistance and protection of displaced and refugee children, taking account their specific needs and best interests, is essential to prevent trafficking of children for all purposes of exploitation.

To reduce risks of trafficking, effective assistance and protection must be provided to refugees and internally displaced persons, without discrimination, in particular on grounds of race, gender, disability or other status, recognising that discrimination and racism may increase vulnerability to trafficking. Recalling Security Council Resolution 2475 (2019), all responses to risks of trafficking in persons, must be disability inclusive, and ensure the rights of persons with disabilities, including in provision of information, access to safe and accessible accommodation, transportation and in all assistance and protection measures. For persons internally displaced, it is critical that access to humanitarian assistance and protection is ensured.

Recalling Security Council Resolution 2388 (2017), States must ensure that survivors of trafficking are provided with appropriate care, assistance and services for their physical, psychological and social recovery, in full respect of their human rights and in a manner that takes full account of the extreme trauma they have suffered and the risk of further victimization and stigmatization. Access to sexual and reproductive health care and psychosocial support for survivors of trafficking, must be ensured, without discrimination. Non-governmental organisations and service providers assisting trafficked persons, and persons at risk of trafficking, must be supported and resourced to carry out their work. We also recall Security Council resolution 2331 (2016) on the importance to prevent trafficking in persons for sexual exploitation and violence for the maintenance of international peace and security, and Security Council resolution 2467 (2019), on the need to adopt a survivor-centred approach in the prevention and response to all forms of conflict-related sexual violence.

Urgent action is now required to ensure that all those engaged in humanitarian assistance and civilian protection are aware of risks of trafficking, and are taking effective prevention and protection measures, in particular ensuring the rights and best interests of all children.”

ENDS

Ms. Siobhán Mullally (Ireland) was appointed as Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children by the UN Human Rights Council in July 2020, to promote the prevention of trafficking in persons in all its forms, and to encourage measures to uphold and protect the human rights of victims. She is also the Established Professor of Human Rights Law and Director of the Irish Centre for Human Rights at the School of Law, National University of Ireland, Galway. Prior to her appointment as Special Rapporteur, she was a member of the Council of Europe Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA), elected as President of GRETA from 2016-2018 and as 1st Vice-President from 2014-2018.

Ms. Reem Alsalem (Jordan) was appointed as Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences by the UN Human Rights Council in July 2021, to recommend measures, ways and means, at the national, regional and international levels, to eliminate violence against women and its causes, and to remedy its consequences. She holds a Masters in International Relations from the American University in Cairo, Egypt (2001) and a Masters in Human Rights Law from the University of Oxford, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (2003). She is an independent consultant on gender issues, the rights of refugees and migrants, transitional justice and humanitarian response.

The Special Rapporteurs are part of what is known as the Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council. Special Procedures, the largest body of independent experts in the UN Human Rights system, is the general name of the Council's independent fact-finding and monitoring mechanisms that address either specific country situations or thematic issues in all parts of the world. Special Procedures' experts work on a voluntary basis; they are not UN staff and do not receive a salary for their work. They are independent from any government or organization and serve in their individual capacity.

Ms. Pramila Patten (Mauritius) was appointed Under-Secretary-General and Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict by the United Nations Secretary-General in June 2017. She has been a practicing barrister-at-law between 1982 to 2017 and has also served since 2003 as a member of the Committee on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women. Since 2014, she has been a member of the High-Level

Advisory Group for the Global Study on Implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace and Security, and since 2010, a member of the Advisory Panel for the African Women's Rights Observatory within the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa. Between 2012 and 2014, Ms. Patten was a member of the Advisory Committee of the Due Diligence Framework Project, having previously served as an adviser in her country's Ministry of Women's Rights, Child Development and Family Welfare from 2000 to 2004; a member of International Women's Rights Action Watch from 1993 to 2002; and a Commissioner appointed by the United Nations Secretary-General to the International Commission of Inquiry into the massacre in Guinea Conakry, in 2009. She was a lecturer in the Faculty of Law at the University of Mauritius between 1987 and 1992, serving also as a District Court Magistrate from 1987 to 1988.

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