Welcome Remarks

By Kristin Parco, Chief of Mission, IOM Phnom Penh

* Her Excellency Chou Bun Eng, Secretary of State, Ministry of Interior and Permanent Vice chairperson of National Committee for Counter Trafficking (NCCT)
* Mark Taylor, Chief of Party, Winrock International
* His/her Excellencies and Key government officials across Ministries and 25 provinces
* Other civil organizations

Good morning.

I would like welcome you all to this important “ Zero Draft of National Consultation Workshop Series On Mid-term Review of Five-Year National Strategic Plan For Counter Trafficking in Persons 2019-2023”.

The COVID-19 pandemic is putting the world under enormous strain, affecting the lives of everyone. The unprecedented measures adopted to flatten the infection curve include enforced quarantine, curfews and lockdowns, travel restrictions, and limitations on economic activities and public life. While at first sight, these enforcement measures and increased police presence at the borders and on the streets seem to dissuade crime, they may also drive it further underground. In trafficking in persons, criminals are adjusting their business models to the ‘new normal’ created by the pandemic, especially through the abuse of modern communications technologies. Most importantly, the pandemic has exacerbated and brought to the forefront the systemic and deeply entrenched economic and societal inequalities that are among the root causes of human trafficking.

The crime of human trafficking is complex and dynamic, taking place in a wide variety of contexts and difficult to detect. One of the greatest challenges in developing targeted counter-trafficking responses and measuring their impact is the lack of reliable, high-quality data related to the scale of human trafficking and the profile of victims. The need for improved international response to human trafficking and commitment to its eradication is illustrated by its prominent inclusion in the targets of the [United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)](http://www.migrationdataportal.org/sdg) and the [Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration](https://migrationdataportal.org/global-compact-for-migration) (GCM). Eradicating human trafficking is addressed specifically in goals 5.2, 8.7 and 16.2. The GCM’s 10th Objective also calls for specific measures to prevent and combat trafficking in persons in the context of international migration.

The Counter Trafficking Data Collection (CTDC) is the first global data hub on human trafficking with data contributed by organizations around the world. In 2020, 108, 613 cases in 164 countries and 175 nationalities were reported globally. A large proportion of victims identified are female, as human trafficking had previously tended to be seen as a crime which affects mostly females who are trafficked for sexual exploitation. Over time, a higher percentage of men have been identified as it has been acknowledged that men can also be vulnerable to many forms of human trafficking, including sexual exploitation, and the identification of such cases has improved. The proportion of children relative to adults for males and females is about the same. CTDC data also show differences in the routes undertaken by victims of trafficking. Nearly 80 per cent of international human trafficking journeys cross through official border control points, such as airports and land border control points. Victims of labour exploitation are more likely to be trafficked through official border control points, while victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation account for more cases crossing borders via locations that don’t have official border control points. This includes irregular routes, such as those across the sea or cross-country. Children are also more likely than adults to be trafficked via routes that don’t have official border control points. Half of the victims identified by CTDC partners are under 26. Nearly a quarter of them are children. In fact, the largest age group in the whole distribution is 15 to 17 years old.

This shows that Trafficking in Persons continue to show high numbers globally and organized transnational crime continue to find different strategies and approach and causes grave physical, sexual and psychological harm to its victims and many of the victims of trafficking fall under this situation and vulnerability due to lack information and awareness and including their rights from information, reporting to access to available services.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Owing to service providers expertise in protection victims of trafficking, many of you are well placed to be increasingly involved in a closer strategic and practical operational relationships with law enforcement agencies which have an influence in combating crime. It is important to remember that service providers, both governmental and non-governmental institutions, including government, NGOs, community based-care, legal support groups, residential care, psychological/social support services, volunteer groups, concerned authorities should discuss with victims on their rights to ensure that the victims can be well-informed about their choices.

IOM as the leading intergovernmental organization in the field of migration is dedicated to promoting humane and orderly migration for the benefit of all and works in the five broad areas of migration management: migration and development, facilitating migration, regulating migration, addressing forced migration, and addressing the impact of climate change on migration. Cross-cutting activities include the promotion of international migration law, policy debate and guidance, protection of migrants’ rights, migration health and the gender dimension of migration.

IOM remains committed to support Royal Government of Cambodia to provide support and technical assistance, facilitate regional and global debate and dialogue on human trafficking, including through the national, International Dialogue and advance understanding of the opportunities and challenges it presents, the identification and development of effective policies for addressing those challenges and to identify comprehensive approaches and measures.

To achieve the vision, strategic framework, goals and objectives set out in the National Strategic Plan to Combat Trafficking in Persons Phase II, for implementation in 2019-2023, the implementation of the four strategies identified in the previous plan must be enhanced and remain important:

* Strengthen cooperation in the formulation and implementation of laws, policies and legal standards
* Promote prevention of all forms of human trafficking and sexual exploitation on children
* Promote law enforcement and criminal justice system
* Increase the protection of victims, especially women and children

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

Let me conclude by saying, we must work together to make one voice effort and not a desperate necessity. My sincere appreciation to Winrock International and USAID for our collaboration in todays consultation and to H.E Chou Bun Eang and NCCT for their leadership and to all ministries and NGOs and CSOs who continue to fight against human trafficking unitrelessly.

Lets have a have stronger and more coherent actions to ensure coordination, continued efforts and genuine responsibility sharing interagency and giving attention to the real drivers of migration both push and pull factors.

I look forward to todays discussion.

Thank you.