



Permanent Mission
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to the other International Organizations
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Item 3 – General Debate

Statement

by

H.E. Mr. Hanns H. Schumacher

Permanent Representative of the Federal Republic of Germany

Mr. President,

I thank you for giving me the floor.

I speak on behalf of a group of countries.

We would like to draw the attention of the Human Rights Council to the alarming increase of activities of criminal networks in North and East Africa. Since 2008, reports about kidnappings, torture, extortion, human trafficking, and physical and sexual abuse of African migrants, mainly Eritrean nationals, refugees and asylum-seekers in Egypt's Sinai Peninsula and Eastern Sudan, and recently in South Libya, have been substantial. These victims, who are often minors, are transiting Ethiopia, Sudan, Libya and Egypt attempting to reach Europe, Israel or other countries. The majority are reportedly forcibly abducted to Egypt's Sinai Peninsula and tortured for ransom by criminal networks. There is abundant evidence of these Eritrean nationals being subject to exploitation and violence, including sexual violence, in a most brutal, frequent and systematic way. Many victims die at the hands of their abusers. Those surviving risk being charged with violation of immigration laws, when apprehended by authorities of the states concerned.

While instruments to address this situation – both at national and international level – are in place, they are not sufficiently implemented or enforced.

Among the countries concerned by this phenomenon, not all have acknowledged or addressed the situation appropriately. Sudan has undertaken some national efforts, including in cooperation with UNHCR and IOM, to address these crimes; a number of suspects have been tried and sentenced. Similarly, Ethiopia has also taken significant efforts to crack down on human trafficking and smuggling. Egypt has expressed its willingness to cooperate with international and regional organizations.

The kidnapping, exploitation, trafficking, violence and abuse have, however, not stopped.

While recognizing the local challenges faced by the authorities, we urge all countries concerned to launch a concerted effort to identify, and to investigate the alleged involvement of officials, and to hold accountable all persons involved in these horrendous crimes.

We call on all countries concerned to increase their vigilance, renew and strengthen their efforts in line with relevant national legislation or their National Plan of Action on combatting human trafficking.

We appeal to all states concerned to join us for a policy of prevention, protection against and prosecution of human trafficking and other crimes against vulnerable groups.

We further urge the countries concerned to stop detaining victims of these criminal networks, including of human trafficking, and to grant them the assistance, protection and post-trauma treatment to which they are entitled under national and international law and to allow them to register with UNHCR should they wish to claim asylum.

We encourage all relevant regional organizations, particularly the African Union and League of Arab States, to support and strengthen regional cooperation and coordination with a view to exchange know-how and best practices and to develop common strategies to combat human trafficking. We also encourage relevant International Organizations, in particular UNODC, IOM, UNHCHR, and OHCHR, to take all necessary steps in their power and within their respective mandates, including to monitor and report, and to provide needed assistance to victims as well as technical assistance to States in order to stop and prevent human trafficking in North and East Africa and.

Finally, we call upon the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, to visit the countries concerned and to keep the Council informed on new developments.

I thank you, Mr. President.