



B E L A R U S

United Nations General Assembly Sixty-fourth Session

Statement by
His Excellency Andrei Dapkiunas,
Permanent Representative
of the Republic of Belarus to the United Nations
before action on draft resolution A/C.3/64/L.11/Rev.1
“Improving coordination of efforts against trafficking in persons”

We are about to adopt a good and important resolution, yet we submit this revised text for your consideration with **mixed** feelings.

On the one hand, there is appreciation of the commitment and determination of the distinguished co-sponsors, the ranks of whom since the time of the first draft have grown to include Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Bolivia, China, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mexico, Tajikistan, Thailand, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Venezuela and, most notably, Zambia on behalf of the entire African Group.

It is worth of special mention that for the first time in years the group of 8 main, initial co-sponsors led not just elaboration of the text of a resolution but steered the critical process of improving the coordination of anti-trafficking efforts which went way beyond the walls of this committee.

We are also grateful to those colleagues who engaged in the consultations in the spirit of earnest and benevolent exchange – not only looking for consensus but always keeping in mind a higher goal – how the United Nations at large – and we here, in particular – can **make a difference**. And, as the wizards of today prompt us, yes we can!

There is also a feeling of subdued elation about the General Assembly tacitly acknowledging the fact that at long last some courageous – I repeat, courageous – fellow ambassadors have been entrusted with a task of leading the consultations and consideration by Member States of a United Nations plan of global anti-trafficking action. Godspeed!

On the other hand, there are some frank and bitter words that have to be said. My only excuse for bringing them to this solemn ceremony is that they are well meant.

If you look closely at the initial draft, you may notice that, save for the obligatory and understandable traditional reference in a couple of paragraphs to the key international legal instruments on human trafficking we all revere and do so for a good reason, the rest of the text was about the things that were new, it was all about the next step.

Probably, we have gone too radically against the grain with that suggestion, but this delegation still continues to believe that automatic repetition of things that hold true not only adds nothing to their value but often depreciates it. We understand that decades-long traditions of drawing up documents in this organisation will not change overnight, but we have the right to be less than respectful towards these conventions when they stand in the way of badly needed action.

At the insistence of some of our colleagues the whole 13 paragraphs were re-introduced from the last year's text because, it was said, they are 'substance'. We respect the opinion of our counterparts – and it shows in the text – but we respectfully refuse to call substance this practice of 'copy'n'pasted' repetition. In our humble view it is more like a smokescreen. A smokescreen that – at least, in this particular case – conceals behind a hefty load of words our collective hesitation and lack of determined action.

From what I have been told, the consultations on the resolution were great fun. In my opinion, it was **sad** fun. This committee is surely no stranger to the 'tug-of-war' debates and voted resolutions. Yet it is utterly sad when we engage in this fashion on issues that should **not** and **cannot** divide us, the issues that tolerate only **honest** dissent.

Giving the victims of modern-day slavery the best of our coordinated and energetic assistance, support and protection is **one such** issue.

Our colleagues who continue to question the 'added value' of the proposed global action against human trafficking display firm resolve, exemplary coordination and discipline. These are some very commendable qualities. It is just that they are directed at a **misplaced** object.

The **real** object of our attention should be the far less than universal participation in basic international instruments on human trafficking, less than perfect cooperation of fellow agencies, rudimentary interaction between the governmental, civil society and multilateral partners, critical blanks and gaps in the way the international community addresses this phenomenon of human trafficking today. There is a simple and straightforward way of dealing with these issues. Its name is practical coordinated action. Its name is the plan.

This is why you will no longer find the phrase 'advisability' in resolutions on human trafficking. Two years ago we have decided to consider it. Last year we expedited its consideration. Had we decided today to 'expedite the expedition,' we would make this Assembly a laughing-stock in the eyes of the world.

This is why it is not morally acceptable to pay tribute to the plight of victims of the transatlantic slavery one day and on another to pay less than minimal respect and attention to the groundbreaking unanimous collective call of the African leaders for global action against modern-day slavery. This is not **politics**. This lies in the domain of the **moral**.

Really, something has to change about the way we proceed further.

Mr Chairman,

We are asking the distinguished members of this assembly to support this resolution not because it is beautiful. It is no longer.

We ask for your support not because it provides great ideas. It doesn't.

We will not even hide from you the fact that this resolution does not crown any meaningful agreement.

- What it does though is that it breaks the convenient and comfortable quiet of 'business as usual' on human trafficking.
- It undermines the serene notion that 'all the instruments are in place' and that the problem is adequately taken care of.
- Last but not least, it goes against the idea – which, I sincerely hope, is unacceptable for the majority of those present in this chamber – that a half-hearted, weak-spirited and vague approach is the best that the United Nations can muster.

The victims of human trafficking deserve **better**. The United Nations can **do** better. The United Nations can do **best** when **united**.