



Main Model United Nations Conference

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18th Session

2nd to 5th of March 2023

SDGs – Leave No One Behind

BACKGROUND

GUIDE

INTERPOL

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Main Model United Nations Conference 2023

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1. Hello and welcome to Frankfurt am Main

Honourable Delegates,

In the name of the entire team, we welcome you all warmly to the 18th Edition of the MainMUN here in the centre of Germany. We, Sarah Greifeld and Sebastian Renke will be your chairs for the upcoming days and therefore, we would like to use the opportunity to introduce ourselves.

My name is Sarah. I graduated from Goethe University in May 2022 with a master's degree in American Studies. I joined MainMUN in 2017 and have served multiple times as chair as well as Secretary General and have been an avid MUN lover since then. I look forward to sharing my passion and knowledge with you in March.

My name is Sebastian. I am a Goethe University alumnus in the field of political science. My MUN career started in 2015 and I have been excited ever since. After a lot of conferences both as a participant and a member of the organisation team, I am now looking forward to chairing this special committee and having good discussions and, further, a good time with all of you.

We will discuss the topic

Streamlining the International Actions Against Human Slavery

during our sessions of the INTERPOL committee at MainMUN 2023.

The topic will be presented on the following pages, and we will be able to get into the topic with some optional guiding questions.

We - at MainMUN - do not require position papers but we strongly advise writing them. Our experience has shown that delegates who take the time to write position papers tend to be more prepared than those who do not. If you choose to write a position paper and hand it in before the deadline, you will also receive feedback from us which provides a unique opportunity to feel more confident in your preparation. We will accept position papers until 20 February 2023, either via mymun or via Ryver, our communication platform that you will receive an invitation for.

Be aware that this Background Guide provides you with just basic information on the topic and you, especially as your country's head of delegation, are required to further inform yourself on the topic and your country's position (on the topic as well as your country's policies as a whole). As the system of an interconnected crisis can always take sharp turns, you need to be well prepared to represent your state in a diplomatic manner and you should also be prepared on the topics of the other committees as your fellow country delegation members might need feedback or support from you.

Delegates should keep in mind that, while we take diplomatic conduct very seriously at MainMUN 2023, the conference is a simulation. Please always be courteous to your fellow delegates, even if you do not agree with their country's policies and try to interact with delegates of member states who are important to your own, even if they are not represented by your friends. MUNs are a great place to form new friendships, which we have both experienced in the past, and we hope you get to experience this as well. Do not forget to lobby for your ideas in the committee and outside, as our experience shows that the best deals are made over food and coffee.

The MainMUN 2023 crisis committees (INTERPOL and Security Council) will observe the standard MainMUN Rules of Procedure for the committee work. In addition, the crisis committee will also follow a certain set of rules specific to the crisis and the heads of countries. You will be provided with those rules separately and will also be able to download them from our website.

If you have any remaining questions regarding the committee, feel free to contact us via email or later in the process via Ryver.

We are looking forward to the conference and are excited to meet you all. We expect very interesting and fruitful debates.

With best regards,

Sarah and Sebastian

2. The Crisis Committees at MainMUN 2023

MainMUN 2023 will be special as we are going to simulate two separate crisis committees: INTERPOL and the Security Council. Our committee will concentrate on internal affairs.

MainMUN is a Model United Nations with an interconnected approach. This means that the heads of the country delegations will most likely be on this committee. The delegates in this committee will not only talk about the presented topic but also will have to interact with the other delegates of their country delegation to establish a consistent country policy throughout the conference. As the head of your country's delegation, you can issue instructions to the country's delegates in the other committees but be aware that delegates from INTERPOL and the Security Council are on the same level. The decisions and instructions are solely up to the delegates and will shape the direction of MainMUN 2023. Therefore, the head delegates have a significant impact and influence on the work done in the other committees.

As an international crisis committee besides the regular structure of the United Nations, the delegates are going to address the most pressing issues. However, the committee will follow the regular MainMUN Rules of Procedure for committees. In addition to those, the crisis committee will also adhere to the second set of the Rules of Procedure which are crisis specific and will be provided to delegates separately. These will explain how the system of directives works and how the members of the crisis committee can use them to perform specific actions during the conference.

We will discuss the topic "Streamlining the International Actions Against Human Slavery" during our sessions of the INTERPOL committee at MainMUN 2023.

The crisis committee will be monothematic but news of other important matters which will need to be debated during the conference can arise at any time. Meaning, delegates should prepare for their country's policies broadly and not just topic specific. Because just like in the "real world", you never know what is going to happen tomorrow.

Since INTERPOL will feature double delegations, we would like to provide you with some useful tips on that. It is wise to take turns with your fellow delegate, so that one of you can take active part in the discussion at hand, while the other keeps a close eye on happenings in the Ryver chat or can take some time to write on a Working Paper.

We hope that you are as excited as we are to discuss slavery and human trafficking and that we can have a very fruitful discussion altogether!

3. INTERPOL

The International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) is an intergovernmental organisation with 195 member states, which supports local police entities (INTERPOL 2022a). Through sharing and accessing data on crimes and criminals, INTERPOL seeks various forms of support for its member states. The groundwork for the formation of the organisation was laid in 1914 when police representatives and lawyers from 24 different countries met to discuss different techniques for identifying and catching fugitives in Monaco at the first International Criminal Police Congress (INTERPOL 2022b). Back then, the representatives voiced their priorities which are still relevant today: connection of police, communication between countries to quickly locate criminals, a common language, training in forensic science and investigative training, identification of criminals, standardising records, and extradition. In 1923, after the First World War, Johannes Schober, at the time President of the Vienna Police, reignited the idea of a joint police body. The International Criminal Police Commission was thus established in September 1923 in Vienna.

Today, the General Secretariat coordinates all INTERPOL's day-to-day activities to fight various crimes. The Secretariat is run by the Secretary-General and staffed with police members as well as civilians. Its headquarters are in Lyon, France while a global complex for innovation is in Singapore and several office branches are located throughout the world (INTERPOL 2022a). As INTERPOL acts as an intergovernmental organisation, there are National Central Bureaus (NCB) in each country that serve as the main point of interaction between the members and the secretariat while INTERPOL's governing body is the General Assembly. To communicate more efficiently, INTERPOL interacts with its member countries through the communications system called I-24/7, which also allows for access to databases and real-time services, even in remote locations.

INTERPOL serves different purposes. Among its main tasks is the management of 19 police databases, investigative support, and work in specialised crime areas. Among its crime programs are:

1. Counterterrorism to assist member countries with identification schemes of individuals, networks, and affiliates
2. Organised and emerging crime: targeting and disrupting international criminal networks
3. Cybercrime: ensure cyberspace is safe for all supporting member states (ibid.)

As crimes become increasingly internationalised, the work of INTERPOL is crucial in terms of coordination to ensure a global security architecture.

4. Introduction

According to the 2021 data from the International Labour Organisation (ILO), an estimated 49.6 million people are in modern slavery on any given day. The 2021 Global Estimates of the UN body indicate that 27.6 million human beings are forced to work against their will and around 22 million are in a marriage that they were forced into.

Yet, the international norms against modern-day slavery are clear: there shall be no slavery. Article 4 of the UN Human Rights Charta clearly states: “No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms.” The Sustainable Development Goals also work for the eradication of slavery. Goal 8 “Decent work and economic growth” and, specifically, goal 8.7 state: states shall

“take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms.” (UN DESA 2022a)

INTERPOL plays an important role in the fight against modern-day slavery. One of the main objectives of the international police force is the fight against human trafficking. Human trafficking is a multi-billion-dollar form of international organised crime, constituting modern-day slavery. Although INTERPOL is not a police force itself, it helps national police to tackle human trafficking via training, international coordination, and partnerships. With its effort, INTERPOL ensures that police internationally are trained and equipped to identify and investigate cases of human trafficking in all its forms. This includes (1) forced labour or domestic servitude, (2) sexual exploitation, (3) forced criminal activities, such as begging, pickpocketing or online crime, and (4) the removal of organs. INTERPOL defines its duty regarding human trafficking as follows:

“Though there are many forms of trafficking, one consistent aspect is the abuse of the vulnerability of the victims. As a result, INTERPOL’s activities follow a victim-centric approach focused on identifying and protecting the victims.” (INTERPOL 2022a).

During MainMUN 2023 the delegates will discuss sufficient measures on how to prevent human slavery by tackling human trafficking and how to use the limited resources of INTERPOL efficiently. This includes but is not limited to the scope of the mandate and the financial aspect. INTERPOL operates in national legislation. It cannot neither extend nor interpret national law (INTERPOL 2022a). Furthermore, Interpol's budget amounts to just 137 million euros according to INTERPOL’s Annual Report 2021. Of this, 30 million euros goes toward the fight against organized crime. INTERPOL must therefore pay close attention to how the funds are used (INTERPOL 2022c). The committee needs to find a sustainable and effective way to bolster INTERPOL’s action in the fight against human trafficking.

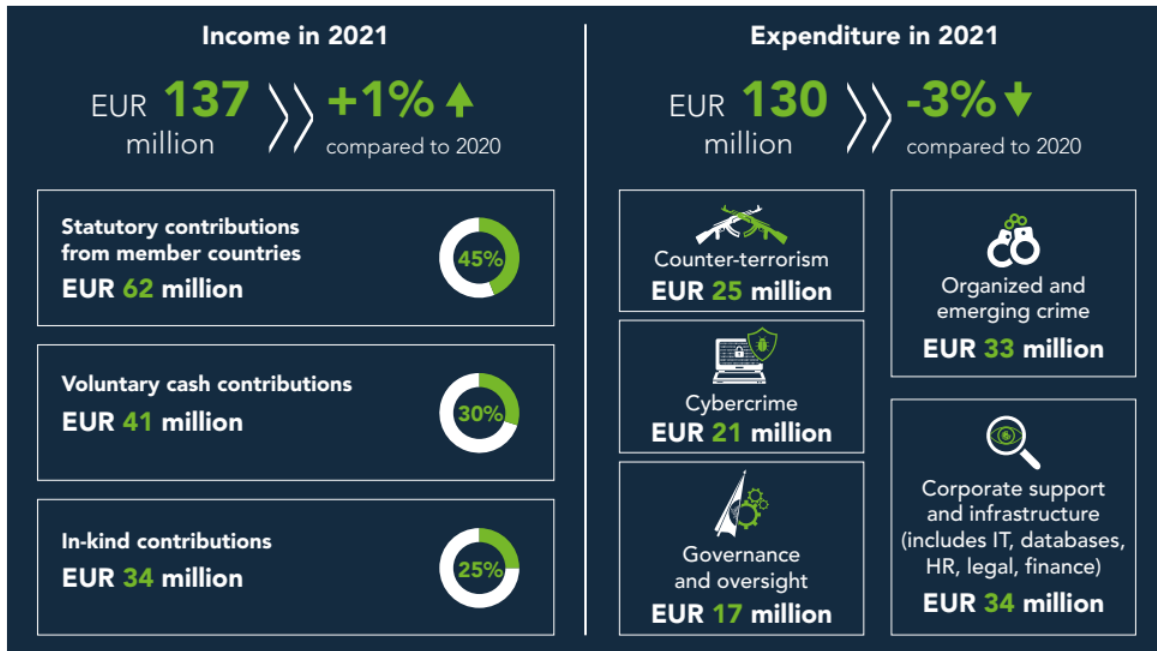


Figure 1: INTERPOL's Income and Expenditure chart 2021 (Source: INTERPOL 2022c)

5. Framework

The international legal framework regarding slavery and human trafficking is highly fragmented. There are a variety of international guidelines and legal frameworks. The individual UN bodies play a crucial role and sometimes compete. INTERPOL is not a UN body per se and, therefore, only follows the guidelines of the Security Council (UNSC) and the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) resolutions to a limited extent. Therefore, this chapter will focus on universal conventions. Nonetheless, it can be helpful to have a look at the resolutions of UNGA and UNSC to prepare for MainMUN 2023.

5.1. Sustainable Development Goals

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide a framework for global action to address the challenges facing humanity and the planet. They represent an ambitious but achievable vision for a better and more sustainable future for all.

Yet, what are the Sustainable Development Goals? The SDGs are a set of 17 global goals adopted by the United Nations in 2015 as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The SDGs are a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that all people can live peaceful and prosperous lives.

The SDGs are interconnected and interdependent, and they cover a wide range of issues, namely poverty, hunger, health, education, gender equality, clean water and sanitation, affordable and clean energy, decent work and economic growth, industry, innovation and infrastructure, reduced inequalities, sustainable cities and communities, responsible consumption and production, climate action, life below water, life on land, peace, justice and strong institutions, and partnerships for the goals.

The SDGs are intended to be transformative, and they aim to leave no one behind by ensuring that the needs of the most vulnerable and marginalised communities are addressed. To achieve the SDGs, it is necessary to involve all sectors of society, including governments, civil society, the private sector, and individuals, in the pursuit of sustainable development.

The Sustainable Development Goals may not be the primary legal tool for fighting slavery and human trafficking. Nevertheless, they also make an essential contribution. In particular, Goals 8, 10 and 16 apply (in descending order of importance). It is important to acknowledge that there are several causes of human trafficking like poverty (targeted by SDG 1), famine (targeted by SDG 2) or inequality among countries (SDG 10). However, INTERPOL cannot fight these causes as it is an intergovernmental issue and can just ease the effects of human trafficking and human slavery. It does so by contributing to goals 8, 5 and 16.

5.1.1. Goal 8

The UN places SDG 8 under the guiding theme “Decent Work and Economic Growth”. Therefore, it connects closely to economic behaviour and economic fair play. The UN explains Goal 8: it “Promote[s] sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all” (UN DESA 2022a). It consists of 12 targets.

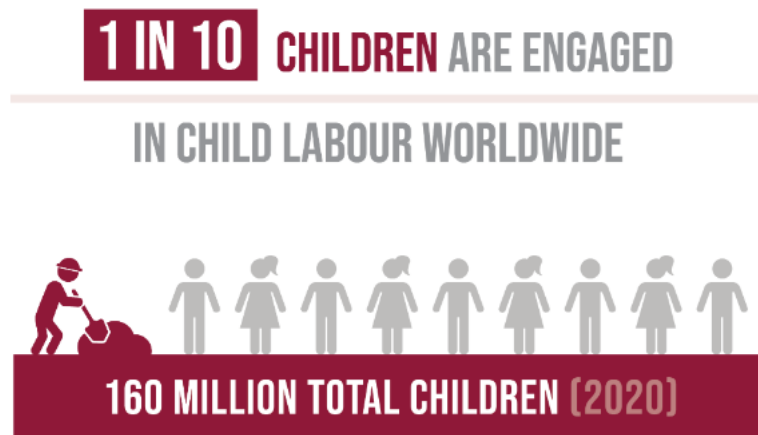


Figure 2: Child labour is a huge issue (Source: UN DESA 2022a)

For our topic, SDG Target 8.7 is essential. It calls

“on all to take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of all forms of child labour as an essential step to achieving decent work for all, full and productive employment and inclusive and sustained economic growth.” (UN DESA 2023a)

5.1.2. Goal 5

SDG 5 calls for gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. While this may not seem like an obvious goal for the work of INTERPOL, it is especially important concerning human slavery, as most women and girls are prone to gender-based violence and global human trafficking (United States Department of State 2006).

In alignment with the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, INTERPOL developed its seven Global Policing Goals (GPCs) to help combat intertwined gender inequality:

1. Counter the threat of terrorism
2. Promote border integrity worldwide
3. Protect vulnerable communities
4. Secure cyberspace for people and business
5. Promote global integrity
6. Curb illicit markets
7. Support environmental security and sustainability

MORE THAN 1 IN 4 WOMEN
(15+ YEARS)



**HAVE BEEN SUBJECTED TO INTIMATE
PARTNER VIOLENCE** (641 MILLION)
AT LEAST ONCE IN THEIR LIFETIME

Figure 3: Violence against women is still a huge issue (UN DESA 2023b)

The GCPs help to establish a solid foundation for sustainable development (INTERPOL 2022d).

5.1.3. Goal 16

Another important goal is goal 16. It aims to "promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels" relating to the work of INTERPOL. Its target 16.2 trying to "end abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children" (UN DESA 2023c) and 16.4 trying to "end all forms of organized crime" (ibid.) are particularly important to the work of INTERPOL, as it aims to fight organized and emerging crime worldwide through its global platforms (INTERPOL 2022a).

As INTERPOL is globally connected, easily accessible platforms for cooperation enable national police institutions to work together and react quickly to the actions of one another. This helps to coordinate different counterparties to support individual efforts regarding organised crime (INTERPOL 2022a).



Figure 3: The high number of Internally Displaced Persons and Refugees allows criminal activity to grow (UN DESA 2023c)

5.2. Other legal resources

There are several legal sources besides the UN Sustainable Development Goals regarding human trafficking, allowing INTERPOL to act.

5.2.1. Slavery Convention and the International Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others

Slavery has been a crucial issue for centuries causing widespread suffering and torment. However, the abolition of slavery was a national or regional issue for a long time. As late as the beginning of the 20th century, slavery became an issue on an international stage. In 1926, the League of Nations agreed on the Slavery Convention. The states agreed to "prevent and suppress the slave trade [and] to bring about, progressively, and as soon as possible, the complete abolition of slavery in all its forms" (Article 2). As of today, just 99 states signed the treaty (United Nations Treaty Collection, 2022a). In 1956, the United Nations extended the convention by the "Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade, and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery". It provides further guidance on the steps that states should take to eliminate slavery and related practices. It defines slavery as "the status or condition of a person over whom any or all of the powers attaching to the right of ownership are exercised" (Article 7) and it prohibits the purchase, sale, and exchange of human beings as well as the use of force, coercion, or deception to obtain the labour or services of a person (ibid.) The Supplementary Convention also prohibits a wide range of practices that are similar to slavery, including debt bondage, serfdom, and the forced removal of children from their families for exploitation. It calls on states to adopt measures to suppress and prevent these practices and to provide assistance and support to victims of slavery and related practices (Article 1).

5.2.2. Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime

The Protocol (also known as Palermo Protocol), published on 15 November 2000, is a legally binding instrument that was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on November 15, 2000. The Palermo Protocol is a supplement to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, which was adopted in 2000. It is the first document that aims to define the term "trafficking in persons" and thus establish forces to end human trafficking globally. It states that it

“is intended to include a range of cases where human beings are exploited by organized criminal groups, particularly where there is an element of duress involved and a transnational aspect, such as the movement of people across borders” (UNODC 2022).

The Palermo Protocol has been ratified by more than 180 states. It has played a key role in the global efforts to combat trafficking in persons. As the United Nations General Assembly adopted the protocol in November 2000, INTERPOL works to combat these forms of international crime by supporting national forces with their knowledge and possibilities of knowledge-sharing across borders.

5.2.3. Convention on the Rights of the Child

The Convention on the Rights of the Child is a human rights treaty that was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on November 20, 1989 (United Nations Treaty Collection 2022b). The Convention is the most widely ratified human rights treaty in history, with all 193 member states of the United Nations ratifying it (ibid.) – a very rare and extraordinary exception in international relations. The Convention on the Rights of the Child is a comprehensive document that sets out the rights to that children around the world are entitled to. It covers a wide range of areas, including the rights to education, health care, protection from abuse and exploitation, and the right to participate in decisions that affect them (ibid.).

The Convention on the Rights of the Child is based on the principle that every child has the right to be treated with dignity and respect (Art. 2), and that their best interests should be a primary consideration in all actions and decisions that affect them (Art. 3). As a summary, the other articles set a certain legal standard, the signatory states must maintain. For instance, the convention states that children have unique needs and vulnerabilities and that they require special protection and care to grow and develop to their full potential. In addition to setting out the rights of children, the Convention on the Rights of the Child also requires states to take all appropriate measures to ensure that these rights are protected and fulfilled. For instance, Article 19 (I) calls “from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse” (UN Nations Treaty Collection 2022b). Art 19 (II) mentions social programs specifically. This is a primary example. However, all 54 articles lay out children’s right and the obligation of states to protect children. This includes the adoption of laws, policies, and programs that promote the well-being of children, as well as the provision of resources and support to help children realise their rights.

The Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) are two legally binding instruments that were adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2000 (United Nations

Treaty Collection 2022c). The Optional Protocols are supplements to the CRC and provide additional provisions related to the involvement of children in armed conflict (United Nations Treaty Collection 2022c) and the sale of children, child prostitution, and child pornography (United Nations Treaty Collection 2022d). For INTERPOL at MainMUN 2023, just one Optional Protocol is relevant due to the committee's specific duty.

The Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution, and Child Pornography (also known as the "Child Protection Protocol") is a legally binding instrument that prohibits the sale of children, child prostitution, and child pornography (Art. 1), and it requires states to take several measures to protect children from these practices. These measures include the adoption of laws and policies that criminalize these practices (Art. 2 and 3), the provision of assistance and support to child victims of these practices (Art. 8), and the cooperation with other states in the investigation and prosecution of offences related to the sale of children, child prostitution, and child pornography (Art. 6).

5.2.4. Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others

The Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others was adopted on 2 December 1949 by General Assembly resolution 317 (IV) and entered into force on 25 July 1951, in accordance with article 24.

The UN agrees to punish sexual exploitation. Especially Article 1 is extremely relevant.

"The Parties to the present Convention agree to punish any person who, to gratify the passions of another: (1) Procures, entices, or leads away, for purposes of prostitution, another person, even with the consent of that person; (2) Exploits the prostitution of another person, even with the consent of that person." (General Assembly resolution 317 (IV))

In Article 17 calls for "appropriate measures to ensure supervision of railway stations, airports, seaports and en route, and of other public places, to prevent international traffic in persons for the purpose of prostitution." (ibid.) By this convention, INTERPOL can take measures to serve the requested security measures internationally, as well as to support national police forces to work connected and share their knowledge through established platforms.

6. Case Study

6.1. Fact and Figures

Funding for the fight against slavery and human trafficking is fragmented. Thirty donor countries committed more than USD 4 billion in Official Development Assistance (ODA) funding to address modern slavery, forced labour, human trafficking, and child labour between 2000 and 2013 (Gleason and Cockayne 2018). Since 2001, the aid has quadrupled, from around USD 150 million in 2001 to USD 433.7 million by 2013. The biggest donor is the United States of America. They lift 60 per cent of the global ODA sum. Canada, Norway, Australia, Sweden, and the UK were next in the list of ODA commitments towards these issues, ranked by commitment size (ibid.)

6.2. Forced Marriage

A challenging factor contributing to human slavery and - trafficking is forced marriage. This is especially relevant for young women and girls. Mostly experienced in areas with armed conflicts and humanitarian emergencies, early and forced marriage is regarded as a protective mechanism (UN WOMEN). According to the “Recommendation on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages”, adopted on 1 November 1965 in the General Assembly resolution 2018 (XX), Principle I “no marriage shall be legally entered into without the full and free consent of both parties, such consent to be expressed by them in person [...]”, and Principle II: “Member States shall take legislative action to specify a minimum age for marriage, which in any case shall not be less than fifteen years of age; no marriage shall be legally entered into by any person under this age [...] (OHCHR). These principles need to be considered when debating forced and early marriage. It should be alarming to national as well as international police forces since the wedded people often face the difficulty of domestic servitude and/ or sexual exploitation (INTERPOL 2022e)

Women and especially girls should be protected from forced and early marriage as a sign of wrongly understood hope and insurance. However, this comes with great difficulty, as the financial burden of gender-based violence, including early marriage and resulting domestic servitude, is immense. World Vision explains that

“it is estimated that the annual cost of intimate partner violence against women in the US exceeds \$8 billion in medical and mental health care (...). A study of the cost of GBV in Bangladesh amounted to 2,05% of national GDP with the majority of this cost borne by survivors and their families” (UN WOMEN 2022).

Thereby, the difficulty of avoiding and solving the problem of early and forced marriage becomes evident.

In 2022, INTERPOL's Operation Storm Makers uncovered migrant smuggling and human trafficking incidences across 25 countries, following 121 arrests and leading to 193 new investigations (INTERPOL 2022f). The operation, from 21 to 25 March, identified organized crime groups that supposedly coordinated the travel of Asian men, women, and children across international borders for profit and exploitation (ibid). INTERPOL's work resulted in the rescue of 80 victims of human trafficking and identified 3,400 irregular migrants. To coordinate work in Asia, control stations were installed in Hanoi and Abu Dhabi, thus allowing for easier access to intelligence databases and coordination between participating countries. In addition, these databases were then connected to airports across the United Arab Emirates for quicker passport checks (ibid).

Operation Storm Makers in Turkey uncovered a related organ trafficking ring that staged wedding photos to fake relationships between donors and recipients (ibid).

Among Operation Storm Makers, the participating countries - Australia, Bangladesh, Brunei, Cambodia, China, France, Germany, Greece, India, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Maldives, Myanmar, Pakistan, Philippines, Portugal, Qatar, Romania, Singapore, Spain, Turkey, UAE, UK, and Vietnam - received support from INTERPOL's Specialized Operational Network against migrant smuggling, as well as its Human Trafficking Experts Group (ibid).

Operation Weka, carried out from 28 March to 2 April 2021, helped European and African authorities to rescue about 55 victims of human trafficking. As it becomes clear, migrant smuggling and forced marriage are often intertwined, as Operation Weka showed. Especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, the most vulnerable groups are even more desperate to escape from their difficulties. One particular case from the operation shows that INTERPOL's efforts to fight human trafficking and resulting slavery and/or forced marriage must continue. A 15-year-old Congolese girl fled from her home country with the help of smugglers and was then forced into marriage. Along the way, she experienced sexual abuse before she was rescued by Tunisian authorities (INTERPOL 2022g).

The operation shows that the INTERPOL Specialized Operational Network against migrant smuggling and the INTERPOL Human Trafficking Expert Group (HTEG) are necessary support units to connect specialised investigations to fight forced marriage.

Participating countries in Operation Weka were Algeria, Angola, Benin, Brazil, Cape-Verde, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, France, Greece, Kenya, Lebanon, Libya, Malawi, Morocco, Portugal, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, South Africa, South Sudan, Spain, Sudan, Tunisia, Uganda, and Zimbabwe.

6.3. Sexual Exploitation

Another aspect that INTERPOL tries to tackle with its work is sexual exploitation, especially of women and children. The International Child Sexual Exploitation (ICSE) video and image database, installed by INTERPOL, serves as an interconnected investigative measure to tackle the sexual exploitation of children (INTERPOL 2022h). Using analytic comparison software, INTERPOL works to identify victims as well as perpetrators worldwide. 68 of INTERPOL's member states take an active part in the database thus enabling the sharing and connecting of information and knowledge of different countries. To this day, ICSE has helped to identify over 30,000 victims and about 13,000 perpetrators, resulting in an average identification of seven victims per day. Often, people are not aware that even the smallest babies can be victims of child sexual exploitation. INTERPOL's efforts to raise awareness through ICSE found staggering statistics, e.g., the younger the victim, the worse the exploitation; 84 % of images on the database contain sexual images; and 65 % of all unidentified victims are girls while 92 % of visible perpetrators have been identified as male (ibid).

At the G7 meeting of Interior and Security Ministers in 2022, INTERPOL Secretary General Jürgen Stock said that

“any connected child or vulnerable individual is a potential victim. [...] The online abuse market, especially live streaming, is global and growing fast. [...] We need to ensure that all abuse content referral, at the national and regional level, is fed systemically into the ICSE database to help reduce the lag between abuse and rescue” (INTERPOL 2022i).

INTERPOL sees it as their core mission to help police forces with the identification of victims of sexual exploitation, first through ICSE, but also through expert training to increase their networks and knowledge and thus make investigations more effective (INTERPOL 2022j). Some include the conduction of investigations online, the use of ICSE, special interview techniques and the categorization of visual material (ibid). Further, INTERPOL sees the identification of victims as a crucial puzzle piece to be able to identify perpetrators. As prevention is key to avoiding further sexual exploitation, INTERPOL works closely with Internet service providers to block access to online material (ibid). For better investigation purposes, INTERPOL has installed a specialist group, which meets annually and consists of members from law enforcement, regional and international organisations, NGOs, the private sector, and academia (ibid). To prevent the spread of child sexual exploitation, INTERPOL works closely with its partners from ECPAT, Human Dignity Foundation, INHOPE, International Justice Mission, Internet Watch Foundation, WeProtect Global Alliance, Virtual Global Taskforce, National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, regional law enforcement organisations, and THORN.

6.4. Forced Labour

INTERPOL facilitates international cooperation in the fight against crime, including the crime of forced labour. INTERPOL's role in combating forced labour includes supporting member countries in the investigation and prosecution of forced labour cases, and the identification and rescue of victims of forced labour. INTERPOL acts based on bilateral (e.g., Operation Sawiyan in 2018) and multilateral cooperation (e.g., Operation Libertad in 2018).

Operation Sawiyan was a cooperation of Interpol with Sudanese police and took place on 26-30 August 2018. 200 Sudanese policemen freed 94 people, 85 of them children. The victims were freed from the hands of gangs involved in illegal migration, child labour and exploitation, and forced begging (INTERPOL 2022k). Several minors were found working in illegal gold mines under harsh conditions. Some of these children, as young as ten years old, were even exposed to hazardous chemicals like mercury and cyanide. Police authorities arrested 14 suspects, including 12 women and 2 men (ibid.). INTERPOL assisted through the National Central Bureau in Khartoum as part of Project Flyway. Lyon describes the project's mission as follows: "Project Flyway helps member countries protect vulnerable communities in North Africa and the Sahel region through capacity building, operational support and the consolidation of global information-sharing platforms" (ibid). During this, INTERPOL took on important tasks. On one hand, the agency assisted in the training of the Sudanese police forces. Lyon placed particular emphasis on training regarding specialist victim and offender interviews and investigative techniques (ibid.). On the other hand, it provided crucial technical equipment for the operation via the I-24/7 System.

Operation Libertad is a perfect example of INTERPOL's success involving multilateral cooperation and multiple INTERPOL offices. From April 3-9, 2018, the Agency worked with Antigua & Barbuda, Aruba, Barbados, Belize, Brazil, Curaçao, Guyana, Jamaica, St. Lucia, St. Vincent & Grenadines, Trinidad & Tobago, and Venezuela (INTERPOL 2022l). Support came from the INTERPOL Command and Coordination Center at the General Secretariat in Lyon, France and the INTERPOL Regional Office in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Around 500 policemen from 13 countries worked together, freeing nearly 350 potential victims of sexual exploitation, and forced labour. The action is seen as a powerful blow against human trafficking in the Caribbean, and Central and South America, in which 22 individuals were arrested. Criminal gangs forced the victims that include children to work in nightclubs, farms, mines, factories, and open-air markets. Several victims were forced into prostitution. The operation was the final step in a two-and-a-half-year project funded by the Canadian government to combat human trafficking. This project provided specialized training to investigators and immigration officers to improve their skills and coordination in this area.

The most recent operation is Operation Priscas, named after a girl, rescued in an earlier operation. From December 5-12, 2022, INTERPOL worked with several West African States, rescuing 90 victims, including 56 children, and arresting 15 suspects (INTERPOL 2022m). They were both forced to work and sexually exploited. For instance: The Action freed 10 minors that were expected to work in illegal gold mines. In Benin, four children were rescued, working forcibly on the Dantokpa market in Cotonou. The investigations are still ongoing. Members of the INTERPOL Human Trafficking Expert Group (HTEG) advised on-site during the operation. Furthermore, INTERPOL carried out over 202,000 instant checks against INTERPOL's databases (ibid.). The agency will support the investigations with Blue Notices in the upcoming weeks. Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte D'Ivoire and Togo took part in the operation.

7. Guiding Questions

- What position does your country have on the issue of human trafficking and slavery?
- Are human trafficking and slavery visible in your country?
- How does your country contribute to the work of INTERPOL?
- Did your country participate in INTERPOL operations?
- How can INTERPOL allocate its funds sustainably and effectively?
- How can INTERPOL improve its funding?
- Is there a need for a consolidation of national legal frameworks on an international level?
- 49.6 million people are in modern slavery on any given day. Is the current legal framework sufficient? If no, what measures can be done to strengthen it?
- How can INTERPOL work more closely with installed specialist groups to prevent sexual abuse against children, especially online?

8. Further Reading

Global Slavery Index: <https://www.globalslaveryindex.org/>

United Nations Treaty Collection, especially treaties under Chapter XVIII “Penal Matters”:

<https://treaties.un.org/pages/ParticipationStatus.aspx?clang=en>

INTERPOL Fact Sheet: Trafficking in human beings:

<https://www.interpol.int/content/download/5506/file/Fact%20Sheet%20-%20Trafficking%20in%20human%20beings.pdf>

Duty, actions, and Operations regarding Human Trafficking:

<https://www.interpol.int/Crimes/Human-trafficking>

Interpol Annual

Report: https://www.interpol.int/content/download/17965/file/INTERPOL%20Annual%20Report%202021_EN.PDF

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