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**Statement by Sandi Čurin,
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***at the High-Level meeting of the General Assembly on the appraisal of the
United nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons***

28 September 2017

Mr. President of the General Assembly, Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, excellences,

Slovenia welcomes this meeting and once again expresses its supports for the political declaration adopted at this High Level meeting. Slovenia aligns itself with the statement made by the European Union and with the statement made by Panama on behalf of the Human Security Network.

Over a decade ago trafficking in persons was considered only one of the forms of international crime, but today it is recognised as a multifaceted phenomenon and human rights issue, constantly evolving and changing, and reaching new severe dimensions.

Trafficking in persons is based on the exploitation of another human being. It affects all parts of society and is becoming a structural element of some economies, but in particular, it infringes the fundamental rights, freedoms and dignity of its victims.

Fact remains trafficking in persons and related modern forms of slavery are on the increase. The underlying reasons include exploitative tendencies, loss of values of a consumer society, increasing demand for cheap labour and global poverty.

Furthermore, trafficking in persons is interlinked with other areas of social life, such as current migration trends and in this regard the exploitation of vulnerability of people on the move – particularly unaccompanied minors.

At the same time, trafficking in persons opens new challenges in the field of the increasingly topical security issues and economic threats in economy sectors with prevailing unskilled labour. Increasing shadow economy, black labour market and unfair competition are a reflection of cheap labour force, which, unfortunately, is too often the subject of trafficking.

In the light of the above, the phenomenon of trafficking in persons is extremely multidimensional and therefore requires a comprehensive and concerted approach. In this context, the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons undoubtedly represents the basis for comprehensive measures at the national level.

Slovenia therefore supports global initiatives, which should be reflected in the measures taken at the national level in all areas of the fight against trafficking in persons.

Slovenia appointed a National Anti-Trafficking Coordinator already in 2002. National Coordinator, assisted by the inter-ministerial working group, plays a key role in the preparation and implementation of two-year action plans. Activities specified in national action plans address different preventive measures and financial assistance to NGOs involved in programmes for victims accommodation. Also the aim is to raise awareness not only of the general public to reduce demand, but also to raise awareness of especially vulnerable groups, notably children.

The prosecution of the criminal offences of trafficking in persons is in most cases concluded with judgments of conviction, which has been established practice in Slovenia for the last eight years. This is also due to a unified and transparent system of prosecuting such crimes with improvements and amendments of the national penal legislation.

But we all know that just prosecuting and convicting the perpetrators does not suffice; special attention must be given to the victims of these crimes. Therefore, Slovenia provides assistance and support to all victims of trafficking in persons, including financial assistance to NGOs involved in programs of care and accommodation for the victims.

National referral mechanism defines necessary proactive cooperation between NGOs and law enforcement authorities as well with other relevant organisations, taking into consideration the best interest of the victim.

Slovenia played a leading role in the implementation of two European projects aimed at combating trafficking in persons more efficiently, namely by introducing requirements for establishing joint investigation teams in the territory of the Western Balkans and conducting training for law enforcement authorities in the region.

Also under Slovenian initiative it was set up an informal network of NATC in SEE back in 2010. Network supported by ICMPD (International Center for Migration Policy Development) is still active and meets twice per year.

Mr President,

In conclusion let me emphasise once more how crucial it is to fully understand the negative effects of human trafficking and of the consequences of this phenomenon for the victims of trafficking, who suffer day after day and many of them become victims more than once. This consciousness first needs to grow in the mind of each individual. Only then we will be able to make use of the existing mechanisms and take effective action as a society and as institutions.

I thank you.