

**Forum:** Human Rights Council (HRC)

**Issue:** Strengthening International Measures to Combat Sex Trafficking in Africa



**Student Officer:** Valeria Papanikolaou

**Position:** Deputy President

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## Personal Introduction

Dear delegates,

I am delighted to welcome you to this year's session of ACGMUN and, more specifically, to the Human Rights Council (HRC). My name is Valeria Papanikolaou, and I am a 16-year-old student, attending the 11<sup>th</sup> grade at Pierce – The American College of Greece. It is a great privilege to serve as one of your Deputy Presidents, and I cannot wait to get acquainted with all of you this February.

My MUN journey began when I attended my school's conference a few years ago. However, it formally started last year, when I became a member of my school's MUN club. MUN has allowed me to understand the complexity of international relations and global issues, while also developing public speaking, debating and critical thinking skills. More importantly, it enabled me to meet people from around the world and create unforgettable memories.

This guide will provide you with imperative information regarding the issue of "Strengthening International Measures to Combat Sex Trafficking in Africa", which is going to be debated during the conference. Considering that this is a challenging topic, I would recommend that you additionally conduct your own research.

If you have any questions regarding this study guide, do not hesitate to contact me via email: [m.papanikolaou@acg.edu](mailto:m.papanikolaou@acg.edu). or the President of the committee via email: [abaranova@campion.edu.gr](mailto:abaranova@campion.edu.gr)

Kind regards,

Valeria Papanikolaou

## Topic Introduction

Sex trafficking in Africa constitutes one of the most urgent issues in the continent, violating fundamental rights. By definition, sex trafficking is “a form of modern-day slavery in which individuals perform commercial sex through the use of force, fraud, or coercion”<sup>1</sup>. The phenomenon began to take the form of a transnational organized crime in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Moreover, the continent is a major region of origin for victims, who are trafficked into other parts of the world, such as Western Europe and the Middle East.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, due to the implication of all regions, it is important to understand the mechanisms that enable it and strengthen the international measures that combat it, as to safeguard human rights and further promote global security.

To begin with, sex trafficking is a difficult issue to combat since it involves many different components. Traffickers target vulnerable groups, with the majority being women and children, in addition to those who are facing poverty, lack education or have been displaced or immigrated due to war conflicts or natural disasters. The victims are exploited, being forced, coerced or even deceived into being involved in sexual activities, which can include prostitution and pornography. Under most circumstances, trafficking networks are hidden behind legitimate businesses, making it harder for the authorities to identify and prosecute them. Even social media is used for the recruitment of victims. Furthermore, the activity of these networks can occur within a single country or even outside of its borders, making their reach international, exploiting the rise of globalization and technology without the physical mobilization of the victims. It is vital to remember that sex trafficking is a profit-making business, one of the largest criminal industries in the world, to be precise, resulting in traffickers gaining significant economic benefits from it.

However, despite all efforts, sex trafficking continues to grow. Factors such as poverty, conflict, gender inequality, corruption, and weak border control contribute to the expansion of criminal organizations, promoting sex trafficking across the continent. Victims suffer from both physical and psychological consequences. Many have suffered from injuries, sexually transmitted infections and other long-term complications, while also experiencing PTSD, depression, anxiety and shame. All result in the social isolation and loss of autonomy of the victims and the limited access to healthcare, protection, and rehabilitation, which worsens their condition. Moreover, this situation also affects communities. A common effect is the normalization of exploitation and violence, the reducing trust in

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<sup>1</sup>“Sex Trafficking.” *National Human Trafficking Hotline*, <https://humantraffickinghotline.org/en/human-trafficking/sex-trafficking>. Accessed 5 Dec. 2025

<sup>2</sup> Obokata, Tom. “Human Trafficking in Africa.” *The African Court of Justice and Human and Peoples’ Rights in Context: Development and Challenges*, edited by Charles C. Jalloh, Kamari M. Clarke, and Vincent O. Nmehielle, Cambridge UP, 2019. *Cambridge Core*, <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108525343.020>. Accessed 4 Dec. 2025

institutions trying to combat the issue, as well as economic problems. On a global level, transnational crime continues to expand, creating further cross border instability and more challenges for international cooperation. In the long-term, trafficking in persons results in intergenerational trauma, while also affecting the progress towards gender equality.

Therefore, strengthening international measures to combat sex trafficking in Africa is vital. Essential components of the international anti-trafficking efforts are enhancing international coordination, promoting transparency and accountability, as well as the development of legal frameworks, victim support, and campaigns to raise awareness. The formation of greater collaboration, international coordinated initiatives, and protection frameworks for all countries and organizations can contribute to the prevention of the issue and assist victim protection efforts. Ultimately, addressing sex trafficking lays the ground for greater security, human rights and dignity within the international community.

## Definition of Key Terms

### Sex Trafficking

“The recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for a commercial sex act in which the commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion or in which the person induced is under 18.”<sup>3</sup>

### Human Trafficking

“Human trafficking involves the use of force, fraud, or coercion to obtain some type of labor or commercial sex act. Every year, millions of men, women, and children are trafficked worldwide. It can happen in any community and victims can be any age, race, gender, or nationality.”<sup>4</sup>

### Exploitation

“The act of using someone or something unfairly for your own advantage.”<sup>5</sup> Traffickers exploit the vulnerable populations in Africa, forcing them into sexual labor for their own profit.

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<sup>3</sup> Office for Victims of Crime. *Understanding Sex Trafficking*. U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Human Trafficking Capacity Building Center, 2025, [https://ovc.ojp.gov/sites/g/files/xyckuh226/files/media/document/tvstta\\_understanding.sex.trafficking\\_508.pdf](https://ovc.ojp.gov/sites/g/files/xyckuh226/files/media/document/tvstta_understanding.sex.trafficking_508.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Department of Homeland Security. “What Is Human Trafficking?” *Blue Campaign*, DHS, 2025, <https://www.dhs.gov/blue-campaign/what-human-trafficking>

<sup>5</sup> “Exploitation.” *Cambridge Dictionary*, Cambridge University Press, n.d., <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/exploitation>

## Survivor-Centered Approach

“A survivor-centred approach applies the human rights based approach to designing and developing programming that ensures that survivors’ rights and needs are first and foremost.”<sup>6</sup> Anti-trafficking strategies in Africa must adopt a survivor-centered approach. By prioritizing the rights, protection, and rehabilitation of the victims over punitive or purely law enforcement objectives.

## Transnational Crime

“Transnational crimes are violations of law that involve more than one country in their planning, execution, or impact. These offenses are distinguished from other crimes in their multinational nature, which poses unique problems in understanding their causes, developing prevention strategies, and mounting effective adjudication procedures. Transnational crimes can be grouped into three broad categories involving the provision of illicit goods (drug trafficking, trafficking in stolen property, weapons trafficking, and counterfeiting), illicit services (commercial sex and human trafficking), and infiltration of business and government (fraud, racketeering, money laundering, and corruption) affecting multiple countries.”<sup>7</sup>

## Coercion

“The use of force to persuade someone to do something that they are unwilling to do.”<sup>8</sup> Internationally traffickers use coercion to force their victims into sexual exploitation.

## Vulnerability

“The quality of being vulnerable (= able to be easily hurt, influenced, or attacked), or something that is vulnerable.”<sup>9</sup> Vulnerable populations, such as women and children, are easily targeted for sex trafficking due to poverty, displacement, or lack of legal protections.

## Border Control Measures

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<sup>6</sup> “Survivor-centred Approach.” *End Violence against Women Now*, UN Women, <https://www.endvawnow.org/en/articles/652-survivor-centred-approach.html>

<sup>7</sup> “Transnational Crime.” *United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) Archive*, United Nations, <https://archive.unescwa.org/transnational-crime>

<sup>8</sup> “Coercion.” *Cambridge Dictionary*, Cambridge University Press, n.d., <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/coercion>

<sup>9</sup> “Vulnerability.” *Cambridge Dictionary*, Cambridge University Press, n.d., <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/vulnerability>

“Border control refers to the measures taken by governments to regulate and manage the movement of people, goods, and services across international borders. It involves the enforcement of laws, policies, and procedures to ensure the security, safety, and integrity of a country's borders.”<sup>10</sup>

## Underreporting

“Underreporting refers to the phenomenon where certain crimes or incidents are not reported to authorities, leading to a significant gap in crime data and statistics. This can occur for various reasons, including victim fear, lack of trust in law enforcement, or a belief that the crime is not serious enough to warrant reporting.”<sup>11</sup> Underreporting of sex trafficking incidents in Africa makes it harder for the authorities to take international measures and understand the true significance of the problem.

## Background Information

### Historical Development of Sex Trafficking

The issue of sex trafficking has existed for thousands of years. The persistent inequality, exploitation, and the severe power imbalance that continues to dominate the world have allowed for the existence of large international networks that to this day engage in human trafficking. For centuries, slavery was legally recognized and practiced across multiple regions of the world, forming the foundation for the existence of modern trafficking networks. Furthermore, between the 16<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century the transatlantic slave trade displaced approximately 12.5 million Africans by force, while also creating the foundation for today's trafficking systems.<sup>12</sup> Even though during the 19<sup>th</sup> century slavery was legally abolished in most parts of the world, other forms of the same nature were created while others persisted, including forced labor and sexual exploitation. To this day, these historical systems continue to pose a threat to vulnerable groups, mostly women and children, especially among marginalized populations.

### Early International Efforts to Combat Trafficking

At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, many movements were created to raise awareness for the continuous exploitation of women and children around the world, which led to the

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<sup>10</sup> Fiveable Content Team. \**Border Control.* Fiveable, Fiveable Inc., Sept. 2025, <https://fiveable.me/key-terms/principles-econ/border-control>

<sup>11</sup> Fiveable Content Team. \**Underreporting.* Fiveable, Fiveable Inc., Sept. 2025, <https://fiveable.me/key-terms/criminology/underreporting>

<sup>12</sup> Giovagnoni, Becky, and Amber Van Schooneveld. “The History of Human Trafficking.” *The Exodus Road*, 25 Jan. 2022, <https://theexodusroad.com/history-of-human-trafficking/>

first international anti-trafficking initiatives. Moreover, in 1904, the International Agreement for the Suppression of the White Slave Traffic<sup>13</sup> was established, making the first formal international attempt to resolve the issue of sex trafficking. Followed by the League of Nations International Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Women and Children of 1921<sup>14</sup>, which attempted to expand global cooperation and the recognition of trafficking as a violation of fundamental human rights. Ultimately, these primitive frameworks lacked the strong enforcement mechanisms needed to truly combat this global issue. However, they laid the groundwork for future, more developed and effective frameworks to form, in addition to other international institutions and organizations dedicated to combating trafficking in persons.

### Post–World War II Developments

After the end of the Second World War, because of the atrocities committed during the war, all organizations internationally aimed to establish new mechanisms to protect human rights in all nations, especially through the establishment of the United Nations. In 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights formally recognized freedom, dignity, and equality as universally fundamental human rights.<sup>15</sup> Additionally, in 1949, the UN Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others was formed<sup>16</sup>, serving as the first legally binding international agreement that specifically targets trafficking. The above developments are considered as the first steps towards combating the persistent issue of human trafficking since they resulted in a global legal framework that recognizes the act of trafficking persons as a violation of fundamental human rights.

### Modern Understanding of Sex Trafficking

Despite international efforts, sex trafficking is still a global crime that operates and affects every region of the world, constituting one of the largest criminal systems. Additionally, developments such as globalization, technological advancements, and digital platforms have resulted in the evolution of the trafficking methods. The increase of globalization has facilitated the easier flow of money

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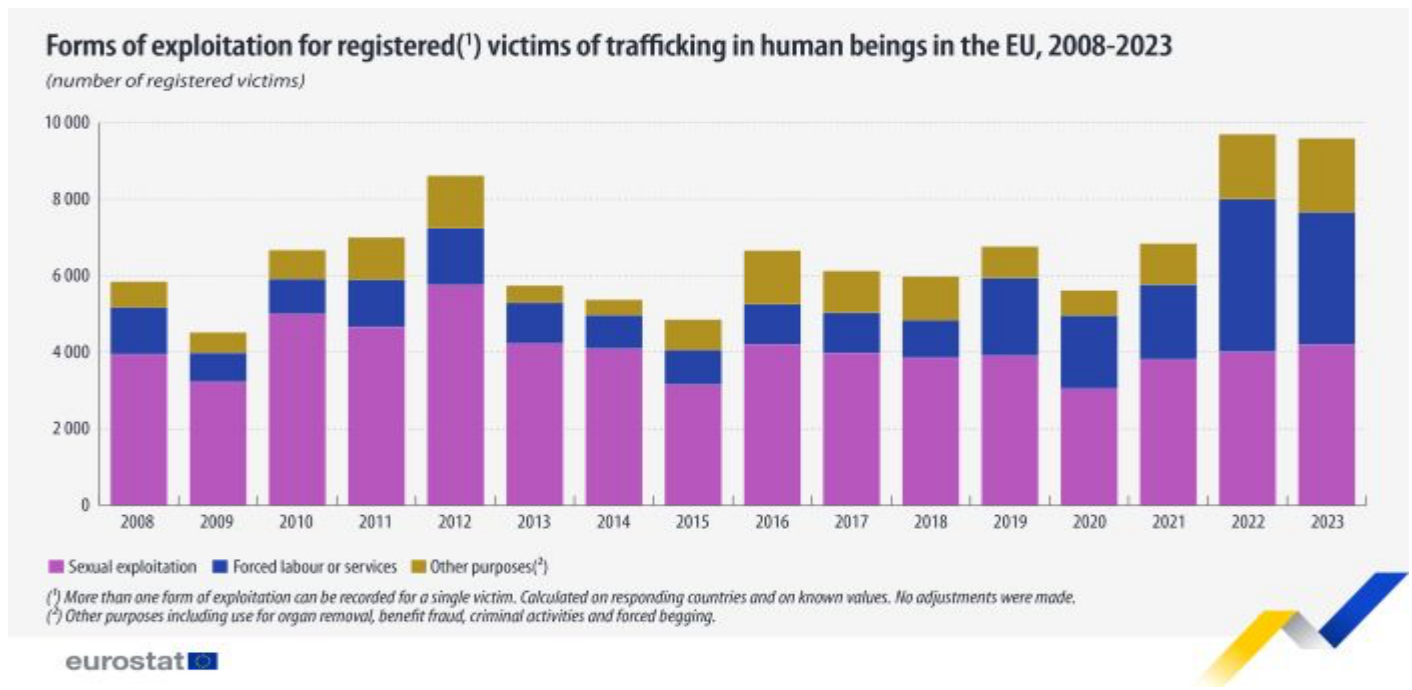
<sup>13</sup> *International Agreement for the Suppression of the “White Slave Traffic.”* United Nations Treaty Series, Paris, 18 May 1904, <https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/MTDSG/Volume%20I/Chapter%20VII/VII-8.en.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> *International Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Women and Children.* WhatConvention.org, 1921, <https://www.whatconvention.org/en/convention/307>

<sup>15</sup> United Nations. *Universal Declaration of Human Rights.* United Nations, 1948, <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>

<sup>16</sup> *Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others.* United Nations Digital Library, 1949, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/210332?v=pdf>

internationally, as well as the spread of information, and the expansion of criminal networks. Online platforms are used by traffickers around the globe to coordinate operations across borders, making prosecution an even more difficult task while allowing networks to expand their reach internationally without the need for the physical movement of their victims. Furthermore, modern technology, more specifically social media and other online platforms are increasingly used by these criminal organizations for the recruitment and manipulation of victims, as well as their advertisement. Moreover, trafficking systems are often hidden within legitimate industries and everyday environments, making the detection by the authorities very difficult and the manipulation of vulnerable groups even easier.<sup>17</sup>



**Figure 1:**<sup>18</sup> recorded forms of exploitation of victims of human trafficking in the EU between 2008 and 2023

### Vulnerability and Risk Factors

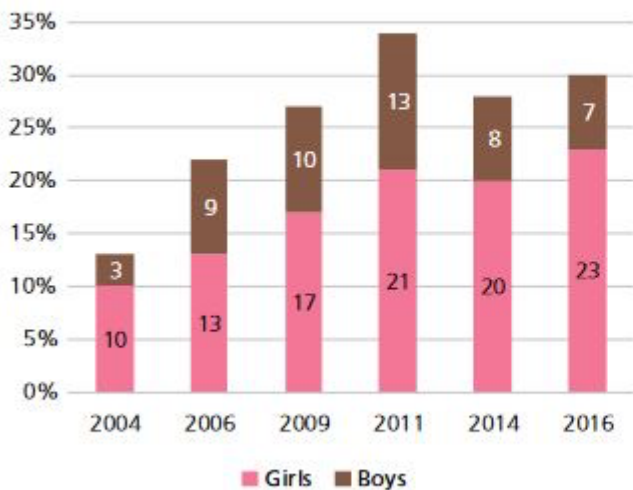
The sex trafficking networks mainly target vulnerable groups, which do not have access to the needed resources to combat it or are easier to manipulate. In most cases, the victims face issues such

<sup>17</sup> Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children. OHCHR, United Nations, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/protocol-prevent-suppress-and-punish-trafficking-persons>

<sup>18</sup> EU International Trade in Other Business Services.” Statistics Explained, European Commission — Eurostat, ec.europa.eu, updated February 2025, [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=EU\\_international\\_trade\\_in\\_other\\_business\\_services](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=EU_international_trade_in_other_business_services)

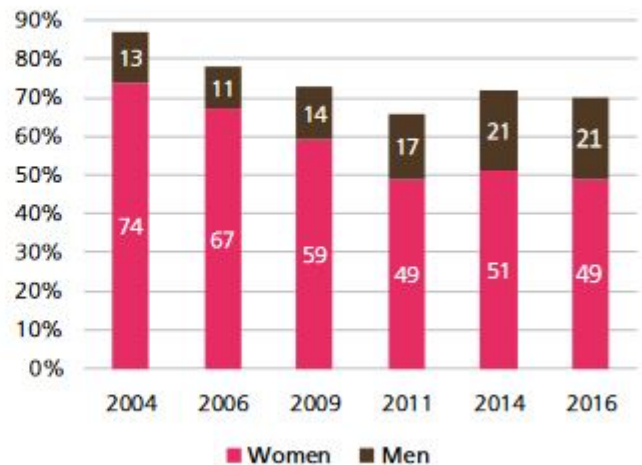
as poverty and economic insecurity, which restrict them from getting help. Moreover, the gender inequality and discrimination that exists between groups is also a major factor that makes women and girls easy victims. Furthermore, others are engaged in armed conflict and want to escape or have been displaced, making them more vulnerable due to loss of homes and access to protection. Additionally, the majority lack education, minimizing employment opportunities, forcing them to search for job offers. However, in many cases, the biggest issue is the weak governance of the country or corruption that dominates in the government, which allows for the activity of the sex trafficking organizations. For example, in Libya, due to the ongoing political instability and the lack of effective law enforcement, trafficking networks are still able to exploit migrants and local populations. Ultimately, women and girls represent most of the identified victims, without meaning that men and boys are not also affected by this irregular situation. After all, many victims cannot self-identify due to severe physiological trauma or the heavy distrust for the authorities<sup>19</sup>, which hugely contributes to the widespread underreporting of the matter.

FIG. 13 Trends in the shares of children among detected trafficking victims, selected years



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

FIG. 14 Trends in the shares of adults among detected trafficking victims, selected years



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

<sup>19</sup> Office for Victims of Crime. *Understanding Sex Trafficking*. U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Human Trafficking Capacity Building Center, 2025.

[https://ovc.ojp.gov/sites/g/files/xyckuh226/files/media/document/tvstta\\_understanding.sex.trafficking\\_508.pdf](https://ovc.ojp.gov/sites/g/files/xyckuh226/files/media/document/tvstta_understanding.sex.trafficking_508.pdf)

**Figure 2<sup>20</sup>:** trends in the *rates of detected human trafficking victims by age group (children vs. adults)* from 2004 to 2016

### Challenges in Addressing Sex Trafficking

There are a variety of reasons behind why the issue of sex trafficking has not been resolved yet. To begin with, underreporting creates a flawed data collection, resulting in inefficient addressment by the authorities. It is very common for victims to fear retaliation, deportation, or even social stigma, which prevents them from seeking help. Additionally, it is usual for many victims to be misidentified as undocumented migrants or even criminals,<sup>21</sup> which discourages victims from coming forward, exposes them to punishment instead of support, while also allowing the trafficking networks to continue their activity. Furthermore, the weak enforcement mechanisms make resolving the issue an even more difficult task. The international law relies heavily on voluntary state compliance, limiting accountability, while the inconsistent implementation of anti-trafficking legislation, by the government, minimizes global enforcement.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, conflict and instability create the vulnerable environment that the traffickers need for their operations. Trafficking networks thrive in areas where armed conflict, political instability, and displacement dominate the everyday life of the people, since it allows for their easier exploitation. Even the technological advancements of the last decades have allowed for the further spread of the trafficking networks. Digital platforms offer the means for anonymity during recruitment, a method that evolves rapidly making it difficult for the law enforcement to respond effectively. Finally, the limited victim protection and support available makes the rehabilitation of victims even harder. Most states lack the necessary shelters, psychological support, as well as long term reintegration programs, that the victims need to reenter society and resolve the trauma they might be experiencing. Many victims may even face re-trafficking due to economic problems and lack of support systems.

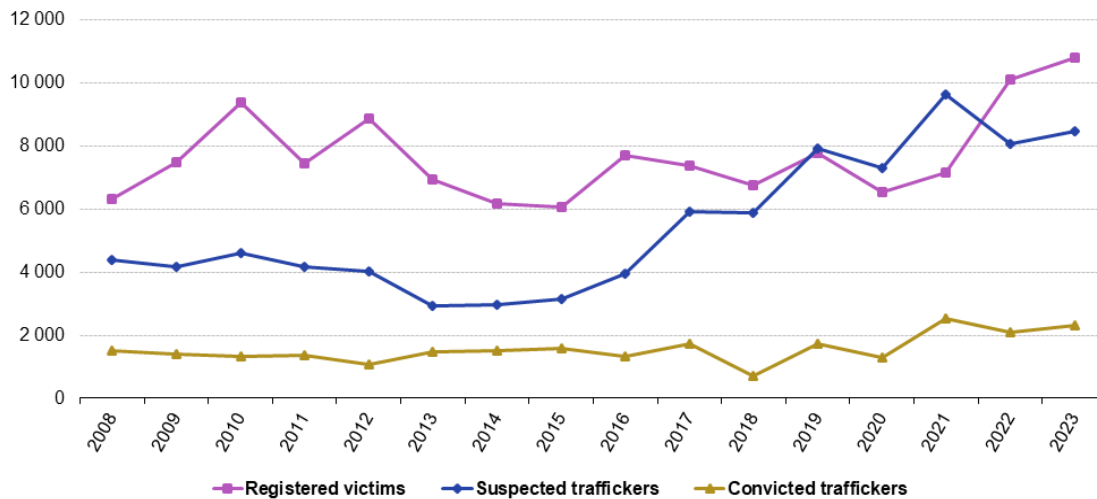
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<sup>20</sup> Center for Girls Foundation. "9 Latest Key Findings the UN Made on Human Trafficking Worldwide." *Center for Girls Foundation*, 2018, [center4girls.org/9-latest-key-findings-the-un-made-on-human-trafficking-worldwide](https://center4girls.org/9-latest-key-findings-the-un-made-on-human-trafficking-worldwide)

<sup>21</sup> United Nations. *Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, Supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (Palermo Protocol)*. 15 Nov. 2000, [www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/protocol-prevent-suppress-and-punish-trafficking-persons](http://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/protocol-prevent-suppress-and-punish-trafficking-persons)

<sup>22</sup> *ibid*

**Persons involved in trafficking in human beings by legal status, 2008-2023**  
(number of persons)



Notes: Totals for responding countries. No adjustments were made. For suspected persons, Estonia provided data in 2023 but not in 2022. For convicted persons, Belgium didn't provided date for both years.  
Source: Eurostat (crim\_thb\_sex)



**Figure 3<sup>23</sup>:** Data on the number of people involved in human trafficking by legal status (victims, suspected traffickers, and convicted traffickers) over the period roughly 2008–2023

## Major Countries and Organizations Involved

### Nigeria

Nigeria has taken the first steps to combat sex trafficking by criminalizing it officially in 2003 through the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Law Enforcement and Administration Act, and cooperated internationally, with Italy as well, to find ways to resolve the issue of transnational trafficking of Nigerian women and girls.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, a variety of victim rehabilitation and reintegration programs have been implemented domestically by the Nigerian government. In addition to these efforts, multiple awareness campaigns, such as NAPTIP-led national awareness campaigns, have been made as to reduce recruitment of vulnerable populations like victims of poverty, unemployment, limited education,<sup>25</sup> etc. However, these efforts have had very limited success. Even though international cooperation has helped prosecute traffickers, Nigeria is still one of the major source, destination, and transit countries of the sex trafficking system. The programs for domestic prevention and rehabilitation have had a very

<sup>23</sup> *Trafficking in human beings statistics.* Eurostat, European Commission, *Statistics Explained*, European Union, data extracted March 2025, [ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Trafficking\\_in\\_human\\_beings\\_statistics](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Trafficking_in_human_beings_statistics)

<sup>24</sup> "Trafficking in Nigeria." Women's Consortium of Nigeria, <https://www.womenconsortiumofnigeria.org/?q=content/nigeria>

<sup>25</sup> *ibid*

minimal effect, and the recruitment from the rural areas of the country has remained as persistent and challenging as before.

## South Africa

South Africa officially criminalized sex trafficking under the Prevention and Combating of Trafficking in Persons Act (PACOTIP) in 2013 and the Criminal Law (Sexual Offenses and Related Matters) Amendment Act in 2007, establishing penalties up to life imprisonment.<sup>26</sup> Additionally, specialized units were formed, such as the South African Police Service (SAPS) anti-trafficking unit and family, child, and sexual offense units.<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, the government increased measures for victim identification, with emphasis on migrants, children, and individuals working in the commercial sex business.<sup>28</sup> By providing victim support, including shelters, medical care, psycho-social support, legal assistance, and temporary protection status, the effectiveness of counter trafficking measures was increased. Finally, South Africa enhanced its international cooperation with organizations such as the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL), and regional partners.<sup>29</sup> However, these measures have been partially successful, even though hundreds of victims have been identified and assisted to safely reenter society, and some key traffickers have been prosecuted. The issues that have limited the reach and effectiveness of these measures is that the enforcement has been inconsistent across all provinces, the shelters provided are not sufficient to provide the necessary services to all victims, and the existence of major corruption and official complicity that have allowed networks to continue<sup>30</sup>, to this day, exploiting the women and girls, particularly from Nigeria and other neighboring countries.

## Italy

Italy has criminalized sex trafficking through Articles 600, 601, and 602 since 2003 and child prostitution and pornography under Article 600-bis since 1998.<sup>31</sup> The country has actively cooperated internationally, especially with Nigeria, to resolve the urgent issue of combating sex trafficking of

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<sup>26</sup> U.S. Department of State. "2024 Trafficking in Persons Report: South Africa." *Trafficking in Persons Report*, 2024, U.S. Department of State, <https://www.state.gov/reports/2024-trafficking-in-persons-report/south-africa/>

<sup>27</sup> *ibid*

<sup>28</sup> *ibid*

<sup>29</sup> *ibid*

<sup>30</sup> *ibid*

<sup>31</sup> United Nations. *Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, Supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime*. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), 15 Nov. 2000, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/protocol-prevent-suppress-and-punish-trafficking-persons>

Nigerian women and girls. Moreover, the Single Program has been providing victim support since 2016 for the victims through a variety of services such as shelters, legal aid, medical and psychological care, temporary residence, and work permits. Furthermore, Italy has established a special envoy in addition to elevating the Designated Enforcement Office (DEO) trafficking unit to improve coordination and monitoring of the sex trafficking system.<sup>32</sup> Nevertheless, the government's efforts have had only a moderate success rate. Hundreds of African victims have been identified and assisted, in addition to some arrests. However, the majority of child victims in Italy are rarely identified, the oversight of multiple high-risk sectors, such as massage parlors is still limited, and the restitution and compensation for the victims is not awarded.

### United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has made multiple steps to minimize the sex trafficking operations internationally. To begin with, the organization launched in 2024 a global Action against Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling to address sex trafficking in a variety of regions, including Africa.<sup>33</sup> Additionally, it enhanced its influence through digital platforms, highlighting links between organized crime and sex trafficking, noting that over 30%<sup>34</sup> of the victims worldwide are children. Furthermore, it expanded its efforts to protect vulnerable migrants and refugees, two groups that are frequently targeted by sex trafficking organizations in Africa. Moreover, the UNODC has deployed multiple resident experts to the countries that are most vulnerable to sex trafficking, providing them with on the ground assistance as well as technical support.<sup>35</sup> Finally, one of the most influential efforts was strengthening the international frameworks through the UN Trafficking Protocol, endorsed by 181 states<sup>36</sup>, including multiple African nations, aiming to combat and resolve the issue of international trafficking. Ultimately, the UNODC has conducted over a thousand technical, legal, and

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<sup>32</sup> United Nations. *Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, Supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (Palermo Protocol)*. OHCHR, United Nations, 15 Nov. 2000, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/protocol-prevent-suppress-and-punish-trafficking-persons>

<sup>33</sup> United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. "UNODC Launches New Action to Combat Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling." *DevelopmentAid*, 23 Apr. 2024, <https://www.developmentaid.org/news-stream/post/178234/unodc-combat-human-traffickin>

<sup>34</sup> United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants: Global Overview*. UNODC, 2023, <https://www.unodc.org/e4j/en/tip-and-som/module-13/key-issues/global-overview-on-tip-and-som.html>

<sup>35</sup> United Nations. *Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, Supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime*. 15 Nov. 2000, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/protocol-prevent-suppress-and-punish-trafficking-persons>

<sup>36</sup> *ibid*

policy assistance activities globally, including in Africa. It has effectively trained over 35,000<sup>37</sup> anti-trafficking experts, who to this day are helping improve the investigations, prosecutions, and victim protection capacity. Furthermore, through the years, it has supported hundreds of cases in Africa while highlighting the risk of online exploitation, organized crime, and insufficient detection of victims, with a focus on children and other vulnerable groups.

## African Union (AU)

The African Union has developed a continental policy framework to prevent sex trafficking in Africa, with fundamental pillars of law enforcement, the protection of trafficking victims, prevention, raising awareness, the establishment of legal frameworks, and cross border collaboration to combat this international issue.<sup>38</sup> Furthermore, it promotes the collection of data from all member states as well as Regional Economic Communities (RECs), in addition to research, and capacity building. To solidify its efforts, the African Union established a follow up, reporting, and reviewing mechanism to monitor and track the implementation of these measures and their effectiveness.<sup>39</sup> Ultimately, it provides a thorough comprehensive framework that can be operated in all the countries of the continent, aligning with international anti-sex trafficking measures that are enforceable across Africa. However, the effectiveness of these policies and measures depends on the adoption and implementation of the member states, since by themselves they cannot enforce action. Additionally, a variety of challenges remain such as the limited resources available, the uneven capacity, and the need for more consistent laws and enforcement.

## Blocs Expected

### Alliance 1

The members of this alliance should support strengthening the international measures to resolve the issue of sex trafficking in Africa, as well as prioritize human rights and advocate. Moreover, the members should be More Economically Developed Countries (MEDCs) and should include: The

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<sup>37</sup> United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. "UNODC Launches New Action to Combat Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling." *DevelopmentAid*, 23 Apr. 2024, <https://www.developmentaid.org/news-stream/post/178234/unodc-combat-human-traffickin>

<sup>38</sup> African Union. *Policy on the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons in Africa*. African Union, 16 July 2024, [https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/43950-doc-AU\\_Policy\\_on\\_the\\_Prevention\\_of\\_Trafficking\\_in\\_Persons\\_in\\_Africa\\_-\\_Final.pdf](https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/43950-doc-AU_Policy_on_the_Prevention_of_Trafficking_in_Persons_in_Africa_-_Final.pdf)

<sup>39</sup> *ibid*

European Union (EU), the United States of America (USA), Canada, Australia (countries with anti-trafficking policies)

**Alliance 2**

The members of this alliance should mostly be African states that emphasize and prioritize the issue of national sovereignty and would argue for more domestic-led solutions. Furthermore, it should include countries classified as Low- and Middle-Income Developing Countries (LEDCs), which advocate for more domestic-led solutions, and national sovereignty.

**Timeline of Events**

Date	Description of Event
1501–1867	Transatlantic Slave Trade displaces approximately 12.5 million Africans, establishing systems of forced labor and exploitation.
1807–1888	Slavery legally abolished in most developed countries but forced labor and sexual exploitation continue in new forms.
18 May 1904	The International Agreement for the Suppression of the White Slave Traffic marks the first formal international effort to combat sex trafficking.
4 September 1921	International Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Women and Children adopted by the League of Nations to expand global cooperation.
10 December 1948	Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) adopted, formally recognizing freedom, dignity, and equality as universal human rights.

<p>21 December 1949</p>	<p>The UN Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others becomes the first legally binding agreement specifically targeting trafficking.</p>
<p>15 November 2000</p>	<p>UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (Palermo Protocol) adopted, establishing internationally accepted definitions and measures.</p>
<p>14 July 2003</p>	<p>Nigeria criminalizes sex trafficking through the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Law Enforcement and Administration Act.</p>
<p>16 February 2007</p>	<p>South Africa enhances legal framework and victim support through the Criminal Law (Sexual Offenses and Related Matters) Amendment Act.</p>
<p>3 April 2013</p>	<p>South Africa enacts Prevention and Combating of Trafficking in Persons Act (PACOTIP), creating specialized units for law enforcement and victim protection.</p>
<p>1 January 2016</p>	<p>Italy implements the “Single Program” for victim support, offering shelters, legal aid, medical and psychological care, temporary residence, and work permits.</p>
<p>23 April 2024</p>	<p>UNODC launches Global Action Against Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling to address sex trafficking in Africa and worldwide, strengthening international frameworks and training over 35,000 anti-trafficking experts.</p>

## Relevant UN Resolutions, Treaties & Events

- [Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children \(Palermo Protocol\)](#), 15th of November 2000 (A/RES/55/25)
- [United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime \(UNTOC\)](#), 15th of November 2000 (A/RES/55/25)
- [United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons \(GPA\)](#), 30th of July 2010 (A/RES/64/293)
- [United Nations General Assembly Resolution 68/192: Improving the coordination of efforts against trafficking in persons](#), 18th of December 2013 (A/RES/68/192)
- [United Nations Security Council Resolution 2388](#), 21st of November 2017 (S/RES/2388)

## Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

### European Union (EU) Programme for Better Migration Management (BMM)

The Better Migration Management (BMM) Programme was established in 2016<sup>40</sup>, aiming to address the issue of sex trafficking and the smuggling of migrants in the Horn of Africa. It was funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and the European Union (EU), and implemented by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), International Organization for Migration (IOM), United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), British Council, and Civipol. The program through a variety of policies strengthens the governance of migration, aligning with the African Union (AU) and Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). Additionally, by strengthening the law enforcement, the management for migration, and the judicial processes it enhances the efforts to minimize and resolve the ongoing sex trafficking activity. Furthermore, it supports the protection of vulnerable groups, which constitute the main targets of traffickers, as well as victims of sex trafficking, particularly women and children, through referral systems and access to protection services. Moreover, the program energetically aims to raise awareness on the dangers of irregular migration and trafficking, while also encouraging safer alternatives for migration. Generally, it has improved the identification of the victims as well as the coordination of the authorities in the region. Additionally, its regional approach plays a vital role in

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<sup>40</sup> United Nations Network on Migration. "Better Migration Management (BMM) Programme." *UN Migration Network*, United Nations, <https://migrationnetwork.un.org/projects/better-migration-management-bmm-programme>

improving strategy to prevent displacement of multiple trafficking routes internationally. However, even though many of the measures have improved the situation, obstacles such as limited resources and infrastructure, inconsistent implementation, and inequality between the community. Ultimately, the effectiveness of the program heavily depends on the continuity of the collaboration, funding, and long-term political commitment from all the countries involved.

### **European Union Emergency Trust Fund for Africa (EUTF) on Dismantling Criminal Networks**

The Regional Programme to Combat Migrant Smuggling & Human Trafficking (North Africa) was launched in 2017 by the UNODC. It is funded by the EU with a contribution of 15 million euros,<sup>41</sup> with the objective to minimize sex trafficking and migrant smuggling in countries of South Africa, mainly Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, and Tunisia, by dismantling the networks of organized crime in the region. Moreover, the approach of the programme focuses on border control, improving investigation procedures and resources, and enhancing the prosecution of traffickers through a well-trained law enforcement and improved judicial cooperation. Additionally, it aims to improve the identification and protection of the trafficking victims, with an emphasis on women and other vulnerable groups. Ultimately, the programme has strengthened cooperation and the institutional capacity throughout the region. However, its impact is limited due to the uneven enforcement of the measures, the political instability that dominates in the area, and the differing legal systems.

### **Arab League (LAS) Model Law to Combat Trafficking in Persons**

The Saudi Arabia – National Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Persons was launched for 2017-2020,<sup>42</sup> its structured framework, based on the Saudi legal and human rights committees, aiming to combat trafficking in persons with a focus on sexual exploitation. It developed a National Plan, which was structured on the four pillars of anti-trafficking: prevention, protection, prosecution, and cooperation, with the objective to guide coordinated national efforts. Additionally, it introduced National Referral Mechanism (NRM) to coordinate the assistance and protection of the victims, as well as their

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<sup>41</sup> European Union. *Dismantling the Criminal Networks Operating in North Africa and Involved in Migrant Smuggling and Human Trafficking*. Emergency Trust Fund for Africa, [https://trust-fund-for-africa.europa.eu/our-programmes/dismantling-criminal-networks-operating-north-africa-and-involved-migrant-smuggling-and-human\\_en](https://trust-fund-for-africa.europa.eu/our-programmes/dismantling-criminal-networks-operating-north-africa-and-involved-migrant-smuggling-and-human_en)

<sup>42</sup> Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. *National Action Plan for Combating Trafficking in Persons, 2017–2020*. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), [https://www.unodc.org/cld/uploads/res//treaties/strategies/saudi\\_arabia/saux0001s\\_html/National\\_Action\\_Plan\\_2017-20.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/cld/uploads/res//treaties/strategies/saudi_arabia/saux0001s_html/National_Action_Plan_2017-20.pdf)

identification.<sup>43</sup> Furthermore, it established and promoted training programmes, in partnership with multiple UN agencies, for government officials, diplomats, and other workers, as to promote further victim support. Finally, the programme focused on raising public awareness in cooperation with other international partners, including UNODC. Ultimately, the programme had significant success in making a step towards a coordinated response to the issue, while also improving diplomatic responses, victim identification. However, challenges, such as ensuring the consistent implementation of measures throughout the region, remain for the further implementation and consistency of the measures throughout the region, in addition to the fact that the full impact of the programme relies on continued follow up and updated action plans.

### **North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Policy on Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings (CTHB)**

The NATO policy of Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings (CTHB) was first adopted in 2004.<sup>44</sup> It is focused on promoting human rights, democracy, gender equality, and human security in all operations throughout the globe. While recognizing the fact that sex trafficking affects people, mainly women and girls internationally, it also highlights how trafficking worsens conflict, organized crime, and promotes further instability. This policy is applied to all NATO personnel in missions in both times of peace and post-conflict. It is mainly focused on preventing trafficking in contracts, supply-chains, and operations, while implementing a variety of measures to reduce demand for the exploitation of vulnerable groups. Additionally, it conducts risk assessment for possible activity while coordinating with host countries, international organizations, and civil society for the better protection of victims. Furthermore, it establishes mandatory pre-deployment and in-theatre training for personnel with the aim to improve awareness and preparation for future operations.<sup>45</sup> However, NATO has only a supportive role and relies on cooperation with other nations, thus its effect on the issue of sex trafficking is indirect and dependent on the international and local context.

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<sup>43</sup> United Nations. *Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, Supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime*. OHCHR, United Nations, 15 Nov. 2000, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/protocol-prevent-suppress-and-punish-trafficking-persons>

<sup>44</sup> NATO. *NATO Policy on Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings*. 12 July 2023, <https://www.nato.int/en/about-us/official-texts-and-resources/official-texts/2023/07/12/nato-policy-on-combatting-trafficking-in-human-beings>

<sup>45</sup> United Nations. *Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, Supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime*. OHCHR, 15 Nov. 2000, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/protocol-prevent-suppress-and-punish-trafficking-persons>

## Possible Solutions

### Promoting Capacity-Building for Law Enforcement

The establishment of training programs for law enforcement officers could strengthen the identification process, as well as the prevention and response to sex trafficking. These programs would be promoted and facilitated by the Human Rights Council in cooperation with organizations such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC). Moreover, their focus would be on victim-centered approaches, human rights compliance, in addition to effective investigation techniques, which will all ensure that the officers will handle the cases while also protecting the rights and safety of the victims. Furthermore, through the improvement of the national authorities' capacity, the HRC will be able to combat the sex trafficking networks with more efficient anti trafficking laws and better coordinated efforts.

### Supporting Victims Through Rehabilitation Programs

The establishment of more effective rehabilitation programs will ensure further support for the victims of sex trafficking, providing them with a system that will assist them in recovering and reentering society. It is very common for victims to face many difficulties, such as stigma and challenges in accessing proper healthcare, while also remaining at risk of being re-trafficked. Moreover, providing them with safe shelters and easily accessible psychological and legal support will make their rehabilitation process easier. Furthermore, the HRC can facilitate partnerships between all member states, NGOs, and international organizations to implement and closely monitor all of these programs, to ensure full compliance with the international human rights standards and their full enforcement.

### Enhancing Data Collection and Research

One of the most crucial steps to combat this issue is by understanding how the sex trafficking system works, by enhancing data collection and conducting more in-depth research to better identify trafficking patterns, routes, and victim profiles, as well as gaps in current responses. Reliable information on trafficking routes, patterns, and victim demographics is largely lacking in Africa. The development of regional databases and the implementation of a systematic research program will assist states in creating more effective strategies for the prevention and intervention of trafficking activities. Moreover, the HRC could further encourage the establishment of a standardized data collection

mechanism, while promoting more research collaborations between nations and international organizations, and adopt other resolutions focused on prioritizing evidence-based policymaking.

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