**Position Paper**

**Country:** *Republic of Bulgaria*

**Committee:** *United Nations Children’s Emergency Fund*

**Agenda Item:** *Preventing Child Trafficking in Less Developed and Developing Countries*

Bulgaria is a Balkan nation with diverse terrain encompassing Black Sea coastline, a mountainous interior and rivers, including the Danube. A cultural melting pot with Greek, Slavic, Ottoman, and Persian influences, it has a rich heritage of traditional dance, music, costumes, and crafts.

Human trafficking, also known as trafficking in persons, is a crime that involves compelling or coercing a person to provide labor or services, or to engage in commercial sex acts. The coercion can be subtle or overt, physical or psychological.  Exploitation of a minor for commercial sex is human trafficking, regardless of whether any form of force, fraud, or coercion was used.

The Government of Bulgaria does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking but is making significant efforts to do so. These efforts included prosecuting significantly more suspected traffickers, ordering restitution, and drafting an annual national program for combating trafficking and victim protection with increased funding to implement the national anti-trafficking strategy.

However, the government did not demonstrate overall increasing efforts compared with the previous reporting period, even considering the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on its anti-trafficking capacity. Authorities investigated and convicted significantly fewer traffickers, marking the lowest number of reported investigations and convictions since the government has been reporting trafficking data. Courts continued to issue suspended sentences for most convicted traffickers, which weakened deterrence, did not adequately reflect the nature of the crime, and undercut broader efforts to fight trafficking.

Moreover, uncoordinated child protection services persisted, and although authorities identified 42 child trafficking victims, the government did not report assisting any of them. Furthermore, despite a non-punishment provision, authorities penalized trafficking victims for crimes traffickers compelled them to commit. The lack of resources, legal authority to pursue labor trafficking cases, and sufficient training impeded labor officials’ ability to enforce laws effectively. Finally, corruption in law enforcement and the judiciary continued to hinder progress, and alleged complicity in trafficking crimes persisted with impunity.

**Resources:**

[**https://www.justice.gov/humantrafficking/what-is-human-trafficking**](https://www.justice.gov/humantrafficking/what-is-human-trafficking)

[**https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-trafficking-in-persons-report/bulgaria/**](https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-trafficking-in-persons-report/bulgaria/)

[**https://www.unodc.org/unodc/human-trafficking/**](https://www.unodc.org/unodc/human-trafficking/)

[**https://www.worldschildren.org/child-trafficking-statistics/#:~:text=27%25%20of%20trafficking%20victims%20are%20children.&text=Labor%20trafficking%20involves%20the%20use,and%20nearly%204%20million%20children**](https://www.worldschildren.org/child-trafficking-statistics/#:~:text=27%25%20of%20trafficking%20victims%20are%20children.&text=Labor%20trafficking%20involves%20the%20use,and%20nearly%204%20million%20children)**.**