Country Statement
India

India has been always according the highest priority to the upliftment of the weakest sections in society and our entire independence movement has been mentored by the ideals of Mahatma Gandhi, who is today acknowledged by one and all as the greatest living human being of the 20th century.

Our constitution embodies the philosophy and vision of empowerment of the people and the most vulnerable sections have been given the enabling framework wherein the rights are safeguarded and their potential for economic and social development has been fully enshrined in the document.

India has always accorded at all times the highest priority to prevent and combat trafficking of human beings, by adopting a multi-dimensional strategy that inter alia takes care of the basic concerns of women and children. India's approach to combating trafficking is holistic, participative and inclusive, which is not just restrictive to direct intervention against trafficking but seeks to eradicate the menace through empowering the potential victims.

India is a signatory to a number of international instruments dealing with issues of trafficking. Further within our region, India has taken major initiative especially amongst the SAARC countries to strengthen cooperation so as to address the issue in a focussed and comprehensive manner.

In keeping with the multi-pronged approach, India has been enacting various legislations that aim to combat trafficking for sexual exploitation, prevent and punish exploitation of child labour and ensure rehabilitation of bonded labour. Based on the vision of our leaders, we have empowered the institutions at the grassroots by investing authority in them through major constitutional amendments. Our local elected bodies, known as the Panchayati Raj institutions, have ushered in more than a million women into decision making positions. Not only have women come to exercise control over their lives, they also enjoy political freedom in an unfettered manner. Recognising that poverty has been the bane of the vulnerable, India has embarked on a massive national rural employment scheme that guarantees employment as a matter of legal right. In parallel, the self-help group movement with linkages to micro credit facilities is effectively combating poverty and also generating awareness of the women's rights. Adopting "budgeting for gender equity" as a mission statement, an enabling environment has been created to ensure quantum flow of funds for all women's programmes.

India has been well recognised as a diverse country with a multi-cultural population and differential levels of development. Such a country requires national institutions to serve as watchdogs of canons of governance and to protect and preserve human rights in all its aspects. These institutions such as the National Human Rights Commission, National Commission for Women and the recently set up National Commission for Protection of Child Rights, have been playing a focal and proactive role in eliminating trafficking and other social evils.

In today's context, we cannot underestimate the role of the corporate and business community in developing public private partnership reflecting their corporate social responsibility. In pursuance the government has initiated measures in consultation with industry to develop a blueprint for rehabilitating the victims of trafficking.

I am very happy to acknowledge the efforts of UN.GIFT to increase awareness in the area of trafficking by bringing together all the stake holders in several parts of the world. We in Delhi also declared our support for the beneficial outcomes of these initiatives and we hope that the Vienna Forum will further strengthen international cooperation to fight the menace of trafficking.