



General Assembly

Distr.: General
8 July 2015

Original: English

Human Rights Council

Thirtieth session

Agenda item 3

**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Report of the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and consequences, Urmila Bhoola

Summary

Following a brief overview of the activities carried out by the mandate, the Special Rapporteur in the present report provides a thematic study on enforcing the accountability of States and businesses for preventing, mitigating and redressing contemporary forms of slavery in supply chains.



Contents

	<i>Page</i>
I. Introduction	3
II. Activities of the mandate.....	3
III. Enforcing State and business accountability for ending contemporary forms of slavery in supply chains	4
A. International and regional normative framework for the duty of States to protect the right not to be subjected to slavery and slavery-like practices.....	5
B. Causes and prevalence of contemporary forms of slavery in supply chains and examples of sectors at risk.....	6
C. Steps taken by States to comply with their duty to ensure business accountability for ending contemporary forms of slavery in supply chains	9
D. International framework for the responsibility of businesses to respect human rights	12
E. Business and stakeholder initiatives to address contemporary forms of slavery in supply chains	14
F. Corporate legal liability and access to remedies in cases involving contemporary forms of slavery in supply chains	16
G. Some challenges and gaps to ensuring the accountability of States and businesses for contemporary forms of slavery in supply chains.....	18
IV. Conclusion and recommendations	19

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 24/3, renewing the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and consequences, for three years. Following a brief overview of the activities carried out by the mandate holder, the Special Rapporteur, Urmila Bhoola, then focuses on one of the priority areas as identified in her first report to the Council (A/HRC/27/53): the duty of States and responsibility of business to eliminate contemporary forms of slavery from supply chains.

II. Activities of the mandate

2. The Special Rapporteur conducted official country visits to the Niger and Belgium from 11 to 21 November 2014 and from 19 and 26 February 2015, respectively, and her mission reports are issued as addenda to the present report. She would like to reiterate her gratitude to the Government of the Niger and the Government of Belgium for the cooperation extended before and during the visit and looks forward to continued cooperation on the issues pertaining to her mandate. The Special Rapporteur also wishes to thank all those States that have extended to her an invitation for a visit.

3. Since the presentation of her report to the Council in September 2014, the Special Rapporteur has held consultations with various stakeholders and participated in several events relevant to the mandate, with those most prominent presented below.

4. On 10 September 2014, she made concluding remarks at a Council side event entitled “Religions and Slavery: What role for religions in the fight against contemporary forms of slavery?”, supported by the Permanent Observer Mission of the Holy See and the Permanent Observer Mission of the Order of Malta to the United Nations Office at Geneva.

5. On 1 December 2014, she delivered a keynote speech via video message at a conference entitled “Child Labour and Responsibility of European Consumers”, organized in Vienna on the occasion of the International Day for the Abolition of Slavery by the Academic Council on the United Nations System.

6. From 22 to 23 January 2015, the Special Rapporteur participated in the Global Care Advocacy Workshop, held under the auspices of the Asia Pacific Forum on Women in Law and Development, the Institute for Development Studies and Action Aid International in Bangkok, where she chaired a session on the role of the mandate in eradicating domestic servitude.

7. From 17 to 19 March 2015, the Special Rapporteur participated at the second international legal conference on contemporary forms of slavery, organized at the University of Granada, Spain, and provided an inaugural address.

8. From 25 to 27 March 2015, she presented a paper on the role of the special procedures and human rights treaty bodies in addressing criminal justice for slavery at a policy retreat on “Eradicating modern slavery: What role for international criminal justice?”, organized by the United Nations University, the Freedom Fund, the Permanent Mission of Liechtenstein to the United Nations and the Journal of International Criminal Justice in New York. Prior to that, from 22 to 24 March 2015, the Special Rapporteur held consultation meetings with the Alliance to End Slavery and Trafficking, and Humanity United in Washington, D.C. She also met with the International Corporate Accountability Roundtable, Human Rights First, the United States Agency for International Development and the Bureau of International Labor Affairs.

9. The Special Rapporteur also delivered a keynote speech at the fourth international seminar on contemporary forms of slave labour, which was held at the Universidade Estadual Paulista, Franca, Brazil, from 5 to 8 May 2015.

10. On 18 June 2015, the Special Rapporteur provided an introductory statement via video message at a Council side event on the role of the United Nations in combating the intersection of caste and gender in the area of forced and bonded labour, sponsored by Human Rights Watch, the International Movement Against All Forms of Discrimination and Racism, the Minority Rights Group, Anti-Slavery International and Franciscans International and organized in association with the International Dalit Solidarity Network.

11. In relation to the present thematic report, on 2 April 2015, the mandate holder organized an expert meeting on eradicating contemporary forms of slavery from supply chains in Geneva.¹ The meeting brought together more than 20 leading experts from international organizations, businesses, employer organizations, trade unions, non-governmental organizations, investor groups, foundations and academia. The Special Rapporteur wishes to thank the expert participants for their valuable contributions to the consultation and follow-up thereto.

12. While taking note of the previous initiatives undertaken by mandate holders relating to human rights violations in the context of supply chains,² in the present report, the Special Rapporteur focuses, inter alia, on legal and policy frameworks and stakeholder initiatives to ensure that businesses, in relation to their supply chains, respect human rights and eradicate contemporary forms of slavery, understood for the purpose of the present report primarily as forced labour, debt bondage and the worst forms of child labour, through increased human rights due diligence and effective remediation.

III. Enforcing State and business accountability for ending contemporary forms of slavery in supply chains

13. Following egregious violations of health and building safety standards that resulted in fatal accidents, such as the 2013 Rana Plaza factory collapse in Bangladesh leading to death of over 1,100 garment workers,³ additional attention has been given to increasing State and corporate accountability for violations of human rights, including labour rights, in global value or supply chains.⁴ In this context, the recent commitment by leaders of major global economies at the recent Group of Seven (G7) Summit to take action to address human rights in global supply chains is welcome and needs to be followed up by concrete actions.⁵

¹ See www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Slavery/SRSlavery/Pages/ExpertMeeting2015.aspx.

² See, for example, A/67/261 and A/HRC/23/48/Add.4.

³ These incidents continue to occur. The Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development called for increased business accountability after 72 women workers burned to death in factory fire in the Philippines in May 2015 (www.apwld.org).

⁴ See *Ending Exploitation*, OSCE occasional paper series No.7, p.7. A United Nations Children's Fund report (Children's Rights and Business Principles, p. 9) explains that the value chain of a business "encompasses the activities that convert inputs into outputs by adding value. It includes entities with which the business has a direct or indirect business relationship and which either a) supply products or services that contribute to the business's own products or services [a 'supply chain'], or b) receive products or services from the business" (conventionally known as a production chain).

⁵ See Leaders' Declaration, G7 Summit, 7–8 June 2015, pp. 4–6, https://www.g7germany.de/Content/EN/_Anlagen/G7/2015-06-08-g7-abschluss-eng_en.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=1. See also International Trade Union Confederation statement, available at www.ituc-csi.org/international-union-bodies-welcome.