Oral statement by the **Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women (GAATW)** for the half-day general discussion on trafficking in women and girls in the context of global migration, 22 February 2019

Delivered by: Borislav Gerasimov

Human trafficking is a crime, and a human rights violation, caused by a number of factors related to gender, migration, labour, development, and economic policies. It is a logical outcome of the deeply unequal world in which we live. A world where just 26 people hold as much wealth as the poorest three and a half billion. A world in which millions of people, the majority of them women, are stuck between a rock and a hard place – unable to make a living in their country or community, and in many cases, unable to move to a new one.

Countries of the Global South, under the pressure of multinational corporations and financial institutions, reduce their spending for social protections and services, such as healthcare, child and elder care, and unemployment, roll back labour protections and push down wages. Countries of the Global North, under pressure from nationalistic and xenophobic discourse, implement more and more restrictions on the conditions of entry and work of migrants, especially women, of lower socio-economic status.

This situation, in which patriarchal norms and gender inequalities are exacerbated by unchecked capitalism, is used by traffickers and middlemen to traffic and exploit women and their labour.

Thus in order to prevent and eliminate trafficking, states need to uphold their commitments under CEDAW, the existing human rights instruments, and the SDGs, in particular:

* Ensure access to public services and social protections
* Ensure access to education and skills for decent employment
* End violence and discrimination against women, and ensure women’s full and equal participation in public and political life
* Ensure decent work for all, incluing a living wage and freedom of association
* Reduce income inequality within and between countries
* Prevent, mitigate and manage the impact of climate change
* Eliminate all forms of violence, reduce corruption, and ensure access to justice for all.

In particular, states need to:

1. Introduce, strengthen and enforce labour protections in sectors that rely on migrant workers and women workers, and encourage worker unionisation
2. Make available more regular, long-term or permanent pathways for migration
3. Eliminate gendered restrictions on migration, tied visas, and worker-paid recruitment fees
4. Improve the identification of victims of all forms of trafficking by involving different actors who may come into contact with them
5. Provide voluntary assistance to trafficked persons, delinked from the criminal justice system
6. Provide residence and work permits to allow trafficked persons to remain in the country of destination
7. Ensure that trafficked persons are not prosecuted for irregular entry or stay in the country of destination or for any unlawful activity they were forced to commit
8. Ensure that trafficked persons can claim and receive compensation from the trafficker or the state
9. Ensure that measures to prevent and address trafficking do not negatively impact trafficked persons or other affected groups
10. Ensure that the implementation of anti-trafficking programmes is regularly monitored, with the participation of those affected.