



**Oral statement presented by Caritas Internationalis¹
29th regular session of the Human Rights Council
Point 3 on the agenda: Interactive dialogue with the Special Rapporteur
on trafficking in persons
Geneva, 16 June 2015**

President,

Caritas Internationalis wishes to draw attention to an additional tragedy that compounds the tragedy of being affected by a conflict or its consequences: people trafficking.

We would like to thank the Special Rapporteur for raising this issue in her report.

Trafficking and exploitation of people in conflict and post-conflict situations are becoming increasingly significant. Yet this issue is barely taken into account in the provision of humanitarian aid and long-term accompaniment to conflict-affected populations. This lack of attention may lead to a long-term trafficking pattern in so-called countries under reconstruction after a period of conflict, as well as in countries that have welcomed displaced people or refugees after a war.

Economic exploitation is most common, as it is almost impossible for the people concerned to access the legal labour market due to limited rights or lack of status. This leads to other forms of exploitation. Child labour affects children who before the war never had to deal with it. Exploitation sometimes turns into sexual exploitation or forced criminal activities which tend to become commonplace and even institutionalised. Civil wars lead to long-term rejection of certain minorities by all the warring parties on ethnic or religious grounds; this creates trafficking victims over several generations and strengthens clannish mentalities and crime. This extends beyond the borders of the countries initially concerned. Moreover, the trafficking of migrants opens the door to slavery, as unpaid sums of money due to traffickers create situations of debt bondage that sometimes result in forced marriages.

Therefore, it is necessary to improve prevention, identification of victims and protection of populations at risk, as well as strengthening the legislative arsenal and raising public awareness. Innovative accompaniment actions and methods are implemented and analysed in various countries.

¹ This statement has been prepared in collaboration with eight Caritas members from the Euro-Mediterranean region (Albania, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Kosovo, France, Lebanon and Turkey) who participate in a "research-action" on the connections between conflicts and trafficking.

In the conclusions of her report, the Special Rapporteur emphasises "the importance she attributes to the role and opinions of NGOs and representatives of minorities...".

Civil society and institutions are often closest to situations on the ground and can propose concrete actions for the vulnerable population. However, governments should step up their involvement by supporting these initiatives and turning them into effective policies.

In the light of the above, we call on the international community and this distinguished assembly

- to strongly engage in supporting all research and analysis activities connected with action on the ground in this barely explored area
- and to support effective solutions to protect the dignity of persons.