

## **Statement**

**By the Minister of Justice and Correctional Services of the Republic  
of South Africa, the Hon. M Masutha, MP**

**on the occasion of the High-Level Meeting of the General Assembly  
on the Appraisal of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to  
Combat Trafficking in Persons**

**at the 72<sup>nd</sup> session of the United Nations General Assembly,**

September 2017

Mr President,

We thank you for making arrangements for this High-Level Meeting, which is an important milestone in assessing progress on our efforts to fight the crime of Trafficking in Persons, pursuant to the obligations we undertook to this end under the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons.

We also wish to congratulate Member States on the conclusion of the Political Declaration that this meeting will adopt. We feel that this important Declaration strongly reaffirms our collective will to eradicate the crime of Trafficking in Persons.

Trafficking in Persons has rapidly spiraled into a global crisis, affecting each and every country, whether as a country of origin, transit or destination for victims. South Africa is no exception in this regard, and our law enforcement, and criminal justice system, are engaged in a continuous fight against this terrible crime.

Mr President,

I'm pleased to inform this meeting that we continue to register successes in this fight, and have disrupted several significant syndicates, and successfully arrested, convicted, and imprisoned perpetrators of these crimes. We also continue to provide assistance and support to victims of, in line with international best practices in this regard.

Since the advent of democracy, South Africa has made formidable strides in the development of legislation to protect the rights of

vulnerable persons, including victims of Trafficking in Persons. Whereas offences linked to Trafficking in Persons were previously dealt with by various pieces of legislation, such as the Sexual Offences Act (2007), as well as Children's Act (2005), these are now harmonized under a single, comprehensive statute, **The Prevention and Combatting of Trafficking in Persons Act.**

This important legal framework provides a comprehensive integrate instrument to combat Trafficking in Persons in all of its forms.

This Act creates in South Africa the offence of Trafficking in Persons, broadly defined to include different forms of this crime, including labour trafficking. It also provides for the imposition of appropriate sentences for these crimes. This legislation further provides for various measures to protect and assist victims of Trafficking in Persons.

This Act, which is centred on prevention, protection and prosecution, is also closely aligned with South Africa's international obligations and commitments, particularly under the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children - which supplements the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.

In ensuring nation-wide implementation of our policies on Trafficking in Persons, the South African Government has established the National Inter-sectoral Committee on the Prevention and Combating of Trafficking in Persons. This body comprises of national representatives of all relevant stakeholders, including representatives of civil society, faith based organisations, traditional leaders and others. These coordinating

structures, known as TIP Provincial Task Teams, are replicated throughout all of our nine provinces and also work closely with relevant international organisations.

Indeed we recognise that the achievement of our objectives in eradicating Trafficking in Persons can only be realised through close cooperation, collaboration and partnership with our international partners. The transnational nature of Trafficking necessitates co-operation, and mutual assistance, with other countries, and indeed with international organisations whose expertise on these matters is invaluable. We wish to acknowledge the support and co-operation of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the International Organization for Migrants (IOM) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), in particular, in assisting us to implement our strategies to combat this crime.

With the cooperation of these partners, the South African Government has developed a joint implementation plan under the GLO.ACT - the Global Plan of Action to Prevent and Address Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants. This implementation plan is a four-year joint initiative with the European Union, and the UNODC, which is implemented in partnership with the IOM and UNICEF.

Mr President,

In conclusion, allow me to reaffirm, on behalf of the Government of South Africa, our unwavering commitment to continuing the fight against Trafficking in Persons in all of its manifestations, hand-in-hand with the international community.

I thank you.