



Committee: Social, Cultural and Humanitarian

Question of: Expanding Action to Combat Forced Labour

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Introduction:

Over 20.9 million people around the world are affected by forced labour, which is defined as any work or service extracted from a person against their free will and under the menace of a penalty. This statistic is according to the ILO (International Labour Organisation), which is a UN agency that aims to establish and promote peace within the world of work.

Despite the creation of the Forced Labour Convention in 1930 at the ILC (International Labour Conference) which implored Member States to attempt to combat the issue of forced labour and criminalise the offence, the issue is still extremely prevalent in our society. Those recognised as unprotected and powerless are victimised through various means, sometimes in a subtler way which involves devious schemes and duplicity.

Furthermore, research proves that as well as slavery and human trafficking as a means of forced labour, new methods are being used around the world. Most of the forced labour occurring is said to be within the private economy, and 75% of which is within more physically active sectors, although the 25% that remains is from sexual exploitation.

At the moment, targeting perpetrators has been at the forefront of our minds, and there is less emphasis placed on the protection and support of victims. Sexual exploitation, although the majority of forced labour does not occur in this sector, has been prioritised.

The Issue:

Slavery

Although still a subject of discussion as to what extent they are connected, almost all slavery involves a form of forced labour, as they must act against their will due to the threat of punishment, as defined by the International Labour Organisation's Forced Labour Convention (No. 29, 1930). Forced labour is the most prevalent part of modern slavery, and is the most severe type of exploitation. Physical violence does not always occur, as the common methods used in countries are sometimes worse and date back many years.



Victims

Awareness of the issue at hand has been heightened greatly in recent years, but the problem has not ceased and currently millions are victims of the problem. Those adults and children working in sectors with many workers and yet little regulation are most commonly affected, which includes but is not limited to: agriculture, domestic work, construction, manufacturing, prostitution and market trading. It usually occurs amongst poverty and lack of jobs and education, as well as a loose and/or corrupt judicial system, or an economy dependent on cheap labour.

The issue is believed to have stemmed from the increase in competition between businesses on an international level, and the continual discriminatory beliefs held in society, that are yet to be abolished. There are evident trends with those affected, and they are most commonly women, migrant workers, children, indigenous peoples and other groups which are often discriminated against within particular societies, because they are vulnerable and thus are easier to target. Children make up a quarter of the people in forced labour (10 million in 2012 according to estimates by the ILO), because of their little strength and power. Migrants are often preyed upon because of the language barrier and unfamiliar, new surroundings, which mean little support from others and greater deference for their bosses.

Organisations Involved: The International Labour Organisation

The ILO (International Labour Organisation) has the greatest involvement in the issue. Founded in 1919 in accordance with the Treaty of Versailles at the end of the First World War, it aims to unite people to achieve equality and social justice within the world of work, as well as to monitor and regulate the standards to which companies should comply. The tripartite structure of this UN agency allows governments, employers and employees to be brought together to promote decent work for the world, so that men and women equally are given a fair stake in their careers, in 187 countries globally. The organisation convenes annually in its Geneva headquarters for the International Labour Conference, where discussions are held regarding new and existing working standards, as the body is often perceived as the agency with the utmost authority within the world of work today.

Methods such as training, education, and research are used in collaborative projects within specific countries to help policies to be adopted in businesses. In response to a global economic crisis in 2008, the ILO Decent Work Agenda was established, with an objective to reinforce and ensure fundamental human rights at work, encourage tripartism and social dialogue, develop protection schemes and promote further opportunities to work.

2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Decent Work is one of the 17 sustainable development goals of the United Nations (New York, 2015) and affects many of the other sustainable development goals too. These will be the foundations of the Millennium Development Goals. Peace, security and dignity for men and women alike all require Decent Work, which our society currently lacks severely. Goal 8 aims to 'promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.'

An estimated 600 million new jobs need to be created by 2030 in order to compensate for the growing population. As well as this, it is also necessary to improve working conditions for those in extreme poverty, who are under paid and thus unable to support their families and themselves.

Countries Involved

The ILO has identified several target countries to focus on because they are the places where forced labour is the most prevalent in society and they are updated biennially, which include but are not limited to, China, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Vietnam, Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Zambia, Mauritania, Niger, Bolivia, Brazil, Peru, Guatemala, Paraguay, Jordan, GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) countries and Lebanon. The Commonwealth and constituents in the European Union are also supported but not specifically highlighted.

As of 2012, the ILO estimated the prevalence of forced labour per 1,000 inhabitants, and the greatest was in Central and South Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of independent states, with 4.2 people per 1,000 affected. Following closely was Africa with 4 people per one thousand, then the Middle East, Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, with developed economies and the European Union coming last.

Key Events:

Event/Date	Explanation
1919	Due to the Treaty of Versailles, the ILO was founded as a specialist agency with an objective of achieving social justice in the field of work.
1930	Convention No. 29 was adopted, when forced labour was believed to be used by colonial administrations in certain states. Forced labour was criminalised and States were asked to abstain and to act against the issue.
The Meeting of Experts of the ILO, February 2013, Geneva Headquarters	23 government, employer and worker experts attended this meeting in order to address the 'significant implementation gaps' which still remained, meaning that forced labour was still an issue. The importance of cooperation on all fronts was underlined.
The UN General Assembly's Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking, 2010	This global plan highlighted the importance of urgent action against human trafficking, as well as methods for its prevention.
The Ouagadougou Action Plan in Africa, 2006	This plan was adopted by the EU and African States to combat human trafficking, particularly that of women and children. There were significant attempts of communication regarding prosecution and future preventive measures.

Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue:

The founding of the ILO as a whole, as it was created to ensure social justice, particularly within the workplace. After it became obvious that the problem was getting worse and out of control, the agency became focused primarily on combating forced labour. Thus, Convention No. 29 (1930) was adopted in order to emphasise the immorality and severity of the issue. This convention also defined the term 'forced labour' as 'all work or service which is exacted from any person under the menace of any penalty and for which the said person has not offered himself voluntarily'. Despite this, there was little improvement in statistics due to the rapidly increasing global competition, so Convention No. 105 (1957) was adopted, specifically targeting the abolition of compulsory mobilisation and use of labour by the state for economic development purposes and the use of forced labour as a means of political coercion or as a punishment.

The Ouagadougou Action Plan, conducted by the ILO in conjunction with EU and African States, as well as multiple other action plans created and developed by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

In addition, the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, adopted by the UN General Assembly, aimed to wholly tackle the issue. Prevention methods were outlined and protection for victims was also discussed. The urgency of the matter was reiterated, as well as the need for stronger partnerships and cooperation between governments, society, workers and employees.

In the February 2013 ILO 'Meeting of the Experts', in an attempt to set new standards in the form of protocol and/or recommendation, but no consensus was achieved, however it became obvious that there were serious implementation gaps which will require further action to overcome.

Possible Solutions:

- Prevention strategies and methods aiming to tackle forced labour directly and for the future should be implemented
- Businesses should be supported so that they can respond adequately to forced labour within their supply chains
- Prevention methods for the victims themselves including safeguarding of migrants to decrease their vulnerability should be established
- Justice and the ability to compensate for previous experiences with abuse must be available
- Petitions to implore countries to ratify existing resolutions passed as well as to raise awareness with the general public should be created
- Improved research databases and technology to provide accurate statistical information which can be shared with the public should be developed
- A broader approach to international cooperation, as well as the necessity of unity and communication and social dialogue should be taken
- Involve a wider range of stakeholders for matters being discussed in the ILO
- There should be greater focus on specific areas which will have more detail and research to completely eradicate the issue



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