ANALYSIS OF THE TRAFFICKING OF PERSONS (PREVENTION, PROTECTION AND REHABILITATION) BILL, 2018

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Abstract

In the wake of the alarming increase in the number of cases of human trafficking in India and the inadequacy of the existing legal framework to deal with the same, the Ministry of Women and Child Development has proposed the Trafficking of Persons (Prevention, Protection and Rehabilitation) Bill 2018. It has been claimed to be victim oriented and welfare of victim has been given priority. However, the Bill has been widely criticised by various stakeholders for not being comprehensive and targeting on the sex workers, similar to the existing legal framework on human trafficking in India. In this Bill Comment, the author has tried to critically analyse the Bill and light has been shed on the pros and cons of the Bill. The the rehabilitation and repatriation measures along with various other provisions in the Bill make it significant in dealing with the new dimensions that human trafficking has assumed since the advent of globalisation and are thus endorsed to. However, it is argued that the Bill would be just an addition to the pile of dead letter laws existing in India as the claims made by the Ministry seem tall and superfluous. It would be more adequate to make amendments in the existing legal framework and work towards better enforcement of existing laws rather than coming up with new laws that appear to be just extensions of existing laws. These can be adequately dealt with proper and necessary amendments in the current framework.

I Introduction
II Contents of the Bill
III Current status of the Bill

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I Introduction

The evil of human trafficking has been plaguing our country since time immemorial, particularly since the advent of globalisation and industrialisation in India. Our interaction with the international community has increased, making us a part of this integrated global economy that has reflected positively on our economic growth front. On the other hand it has resulted in victimisation of the vulnerable sections of our society, particularly women and children. Human trafficking is not just an outcome of globalisation but the very part of the process itself. The most wide spread form of human trafficking that is prevalent and has been recognized by our law making bodies is sexual trafficking or immoral flesh trade. Human Trafficking can be called as a form of modern day slavery² whereby perpetrators benefit by exploiting the victims of trafficking. It is a crime against humanity as it is violative of the dignity, rights and liberty of the victims involved. It is a syndicate organised crime that operates as a chain and thus is difficult to eradicate from the society.³ The global estimates on sex trafficking are alarming, what is even more alarming about this crime is that its organised nature makes it one of the most unreported crimes across the globe.⁴ It is a crime against humanity and needs to be combatted at both national and international levels.

There are various push and pull factors that provide a basis for this organised crime.⁵ By push factors we mean factors that induce the victims to move out of the country of origin under expectation of something better in life.⁶ The pull factors on the other hand operate at the destination country and can be said to be the by-products of globalization and modernization.⁷ These include better job opportunities in host countries, better living conditions, political stability etc. From the growing statistics on trafficking, it can be inferred that the push factors

¹Devin Brewer," Globalisation and Human Trafficking: The collision of words"46TRD (2008).

² Joshua N. Aston, *Trafficking of Women and Children: Article 7 of the Rome Statute* 1 (Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2016).

 $^{^{3}}Ibid.$

⁴What is Human Trafficking, *available* at: https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/human-trafficking/what-is-human-trafficking.html(last visited on June 15, 2017).

⁵Veerendra Mishra (ed.), *Human Trafficking: The Stakeholders' Perspective* 6-8(Sage Publications Ltd., New Delhi, 2013).

⁶Ibid.

⁷*Id.*, at 17.

have a stronger influence on the victims and perpetrators of this racket than the pull factors thereby giving rise to this crime situation.⁸

Owing to the push and pull factors, an attempt was made in the shape of Immoral TrafficingPrevention Act (herein after referred to as ITPA) amendment Bill of 2006 that proposed for criminalising customers.⁹ The Bill however lapsed for want of consensus.

Next, in 2016, the Ministry of Women and Child Development had proposed a draft "Trafficking Of Persons (Prevention, Protection And Rehabilitation) Bill, 2016¹⁰(hereinafter referred to as 2016 Bill) and public criticism and suggestions were invited. The 2016 Bill received wide criticism from vasious stakeholders of trafficking. Kotiswaran had critiqued the proposed Bill in that it is again chasing only the sex workers, thereby ignoring the other sectors of human trafficking, particularly sexual slavery and forced labour.¹¹

The 2018Bill is only the latest (proposed) addition to the existing legal framework on trafficking in India. The entire focus of all the existing laws and also the proposed Bill has been on sex trafficking in general and prostitution in particular, neglecting the other forms of human trafficking. However, it is ironical how on one end we are recognising sex trafficking as one of the most heinous forms of trafficking, yet the nature and language of existing laws views sex trafficking only in relation to prostitution.

Owing to the increasing number of trafficking cases in the country and a complete lack of protection measures, the Ministry of Women and Child Development has proposed a draft "Trafficking Of Persons (Prevention, Protection And Rehabilitation) Bill, 2018"¹² to provide for

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ITPA Amendment Bill, 2006, *available at*, http://www.wcd.nic.in/sites/default/files/640ls.pdf (last visited on December 1, 2017).

¹⁰ Trafficking of Persons (Prevention, Protection and Rehabilitation) Bill 2016- DRAFT, Preamble, *available at:* www.wcd.nic.in (last visited on June14, 2017).

¹¹Prabha Kotiswaran, "India's New Anti-Trafficking Bill is an Empty Gesture", The Wire, July 5, 2016, *available at:* https://thewire.in/48494/indias-new-anti-trafficking-bill-is-an-empty-gesture/ (last visited on March 16, 2017).

¹² Trafficking of Persons (Prevention, Protection and Rehabilitation) Bill 2018, *available at:* http://www.lawyerscollective.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Trafficking-Bill-89-of-2018.pdf (last visited on Aug 25, 2018).

prevention, protection and rehabilitation to the victims of human trafficking making it in consonance with the Palermo Protocol.¹³

Having an overview of the Draft Bill, it cannot be said to have been proposed in replacement of the ITPA. However, its wording and scheme of chapters reflects that it might have been proposed to supplement the provisions of ITPA as the latter is majorly penal in nature than being victim centric, while the former is essentially victim oriented with major focus on rehabilitation and protection of victims of trafficking whereby the 'prosecution' aspect of the Palermo Protocol is majorly missing. The Bill is divided into XV parts covering 59 sections dealing with trafficking of persons.

II Contents of Bill

Title

First of all, the title of the proposed Bill is not appropriate. Instead of the current "trafficking of persons", it should be "trafficking in persons" as the latter phrase has wider connotations as it includes within it all chains of human trafficking. While the former involves only the victims of trafficking, it fails to reflect the organised syndicate nature of the offence. On the other hand, "Trafficking in persons" is used in all the international instruments on human trafficking, illuminates on all the stages of trafficking underscoring that it is a crime committed by persons against other persons. For examplewe use trafficking of drugs, chattel but when it comes to persons, use of trafficking "in" persons is more apt.

Short title, extent, commencement and application

Further, section 1(2) states that this Act shall not extend to Jammu and Kashmir. There are various instances of Acts that extend to J & K without any exception. These include Citizenship Act, 1955; Indo- Tibetan Border Police Force Act; Cinematograph Act; Minimum Wages Act; Protection of Human Rights Act; NDPS Act and so on. When these Acts that are related to the offence of trafficking can extend to J & K then why is there such a reservation in the proposed

¹³Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, Supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, 2000.

Bill? Even the NCRB data indicates the presence of cases reported of Human Trafficking in J&K though the number of cases is substantially low compared to other states.¹⁴

Definition

Next, the Bill has proposed a few welcome additions such as providing a definition for terms like victim¹⁵ of trafficking which has not been defined anywhere in the existing Indian legal framework. In fact, even the Palermo Protocol fails to define the term. So this is the first step towards making the legal framework victim- oriented i.e. by recognizing the status of victimhood of the trafficked persons. ¹⁶But, the definition of victim provided in the *Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings* ¹⁷provides a better explanation of the word victim. ¹⁸ However, like the ITPA, even the Bill fails to provide the much needed definition of 'trafficking in persons'.

National Anti- Trafficking Bureau

The 2016 Bill provided for setting up of special agency to investigate (SAI) the offences pertaining to this Act. ¹⁹ Similar power has been conferred to the Anti-Trafficking (AT) Cell set up by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA). ²⁰ There was no clear line drawn between powers of both and so there might be an overlap of powers if the present provision prevails as it is. The MHA has already allocated \$12.3 million to the Organised Crimes Special Agency²¹, setup in line with the directions given by the Supreme Court²² that is pending awaiting the passing of the proposed Bill. The 2018 Bill has done away with the setting up of the SAI and instead, has provided for the setting up of the National Anti- Trafficking Bureau to monitor the prevention and surveillance activities of the law enforcement agencies and other stakeholders in tackling the

¹⁴ NCRB Crime Statistics 2015, *available at*, http://ncrb.nic.in/StatPublications/CII/CII2015/FILES/Statistics-2015_rev1_1.pdf (last visited on July 9, 2017).

¹⁵Supra note 12, s.2 (x): "victim" means a person or persons on whom trafficking of persons is caused or attempted by any other person or persons.

 $^{^{16}}Supra$ note $\overset{-}{2}$ at 45.

¹⁷CoE Convention on Trafficking in Human Beings, *available at*, https://rm.coe.int/168008371d (last visited on June 1, 2017).

¹⁸*Id.*, art 4(e): "Victim" shall mean any natural person who is subject to trafficking in human beings as defined in this article.

¹⁹*Supra* note 12, s.7.

²⁰Anti- Trafficking Cell under MHA, available at, http://mha.nic.in>ATC (last visited on December 11, 2017).

²¹ U.S. State Department, Trafficking In Persons Report (2017) p205, available at,

https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/271339.pdf (last visited on July 9, 2017).

²²BachpanBachaoAndolanv. Union of India (2011) 5 SCC 1.

problem of trafficking and the rehabilitation and rescue measures to be taken for the protection of the victims.²³

The functions of the Bureau also include bringing out the resource material including education curriculum for children, panchayati raj institutions, judicial officers, investigating authorities and other stake holders.²⁴ This is an important measure in making the stakeholders sensitised to the victims of trafficking thereby preventing their further victimization at the hands of the various civil society actors and law agencies.

Overlapping of Agencies

There is an overlap of similar functions such as that of repatriation and rehabilitation that have been assigned to various agencies under this act. Also, instead of working on the enforcement mechanisms and strengthening implementation measures that are lagging in the current legal framework on trafficking, the 2018 Bill provides a complex network of beurocratic agencies. There is a provision for setting up of an Anti-TraffickingUnit²⁵to work at the national level. Along with this, there is provision for creation of Anti Trafficking Committees at both District²⁶ and State level²⁷. To add on, the Bill also provides for the setting up of National Anti-Trafficking Relief and Rehabilitation Committee²⁸. Setting up of such a complex network of beurocracy can only lead to an overlap of functions between them and also wastage of huge amount of funds that can actually be utilized for the welfare of victims. This is clearly against the spirit of victim welfare. Further the Bill seeks to provide for rehabilitation homes and protective homes.²⁹ All have been given the power and duty to provide for rehabilitation services like education, vocational training, legal aid, medical aid and so on.

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²³Supra note 12, s.4.

 $^{^{24}}Id.$, s.4(x).

²⁵*Id.*,s.10.

²⁶Id.,s.12.

²⁷Id..s.13.

¹a.,s.13.

²⁸*Id.*,s.11.

²⁹*Id.*, ss. 3,5,8,9.

Search, Rescue and Post Rescue Activities

Next, under Chapter V³⁰ of the proposed Bill, proper procedure for the search, rescue and post rescue activities is provided for. The earlier Bill of 2016 lacked the pre- rescue and rescue procedures which was a very major flaw in the bill as an organised crime like trafficking needs to be dealt with proper planning and procedure to counter it. This addition in the 2018 Bill is commendable as all the stages from pre to post rescue are equally important and have to be dealt with comprehensively.

Social Integration and Repatriation to another country

India ratified the *UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, 2000*³¹(UN Trafficking Protocol) in 2011.India has a dualist code for implementing ratified treaties in the country whereby the Treaties and Conventions doesn't get the force of law in courts automatically by ratification and the legislature has to enact particular laws in order to bring it in force.³²

The UN Trafficking Protocol is premised on the 3-P (protection, prevention and prosecution) strategy followed by the 3-R (rescue, rehabilitationand reintegration) strategy whereby all its provisions are based on these principles.³³ Thus, even our Indian legal framework on trafficking has to incorporate these principles in order to be in consonance with the Protocol.

The Bill contains provisions relating to social reintegration.³⁴It has cast a duty on various committees to take steps to promote active mainstreaming of the victims of trafficking. This makes the Bill in consonance with the 3-R strategy that is essential for the welfare of victims of trafficking.

Section 26³⁵ provides for the repatriation of victims and lays down the procedure for the same. A serious flaw in this provision is that in case the State Committee is of the opinion that victims

³⁰*Id.*, s.4.

³¹Protocol To Prevent, Suppress And Punish Trafficking In Persons, Especially Women And Children, 2000, art. 3(a), *available at*, http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/ProtocolTraffickingInPersons.aspx (last visited on May 22, 2017).

³²Jolly George Varghese v. Bank of Cochin, 1980 AIR 470.

³³Supra note 13.

³⁴Supra note 12, ss.11-13.

³⁵*Id.*, s.26.

need to be repatriated to their country of origin, the prevailing laws shall apply on it. Problem here is that the Indian laws treat such victims as foreigners and there is no law to deal with migrants and refugees.

The Global Slavery Report of 2016 is focused specifically on aftermath of war and conflict situations and the vulnerabilities of the conflict zones. It has been found that political instability and insurgence is one of the political reasons that have fostered trafficking in persons.³⁶ A recent example of this is Syria whereby people are left with no other option but to migrate in the fear of persecution. This ends them up as vulnerable subjects of trafficking process. It has also been found that in conflict zones, armed groups traffic women and girls for marriage and sexual slavery.³⁷

Thus, the current provision in the Bill will thereby lead to the extradition of the victims adding to their vulnerability and also promoting clandestine movements within the country thereby worsening rather than improving the condition of victims of trafficking.³⁸Hence, a proper procedure for repatriation and stringent guidelines is highly recommended.

Witness Protection

Another welcome addition has been with respect to protection of witnesses. The Bill, under section 42³⁹, punishes for disclosure of identity of victims of trafficking and witnesses of the crimes of human trafficking. So, witness protection is very important to combat human trafficking. In addition to this, there is a specific provision for making arrangements for safety of witnesses, victims and complainants in the case of any fear to their life. ⁴⁰This is an important move as a lot of cases were being dismissed for want of evidence as the victims were hesitant to be witness against their traffickers under fear or threat. ⁴¹Further, looking at the social fabric of

³⁶ Global Slavery Report, 2016, *available at*, https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and- analysis/glotip/2016_Global_Report_on_Trafficking_in_Persons.pdf (last visited on July 3, 2017). ³⁷*Id* at 15.

³⁸RatnaKapur, *Makeshift Migrants and Law: Gender, Belonging, and Postcolonial Anxieties* 205-207(Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, New Delhi, 2010).

³⁹Supra note 12, s.42: Punishment for disclosure of identity.

⁴⁰*Id.*,s.51

⁴¹Supra note 14.

Indian society, revealing the identity of the victims of sex trafficking in particular stigmatise them. 42 This would outcast them from the society.

Victim Compensation

Further, there is a provision of confiscation, forfeiture and attachment of property⁴³ of the convicts under section 29 of this proposed Bill. This guarantees compensation to the victims of trafficking out of the property of the perpetuators of trafficking. The bill also provides for interim relief and monetary relief in addition to the compensation that the victim is entitled to under any state of central scheme.⁴⁴ These provisions are in line with the recommendations given by NALSA to the Supreme Court over the issue. 45 Victim compensation on a whole is lacking in the current legal framework on trafficking in India whereby it is provided only under the general victim compensation schemes running on National and State levels. 46The bill, in addition to this, proposes for the Central Government to establish a Rehabilitation Fund for the rehabilitation and welfare of victims of trafficking.⁴⁷

Prosecution

On the prosecution end, the use of narcotic and psychotropic drugs for the purpose of trafficking 48 have been criminalized under this Bill. It has taken into account the new form of trafficking cases that are coming as by-products of globalization. The use of drugs is very common to force the victim into trafficking. Also in case of sex trafficking, victims are givensedatives so that they can perform sex efficiently and with multiple persons which they may not be able to do otherwise (especially victims new to the vicious circle).⁴⁹

⁴²Supra note 5 at 14.

⁴³Supra note 12, s.20.

⁴⁴*Id.*, ss. 27,28.

⁴⁵NALSA report on sex trafficking and rehabilitation of victims, available at, http://shaktivahini.org/press/nationallegal-services-authority-submits-recommendations-to-supreme-court-for-combatting-human-trafficking-in-india/ (last visited on July 3, 2017).

⁴⁶Victim Compensation in India, *available at*, https://lawreports.wordpress.com (last visited on December 12, 2017). ⁴⁷Supra note 12, s.30.

⁴⁸*Id.*, s.31(3): Using narcotic drugs, psychotropic or alcoholic substances for trafficking.

⁴⁹ Integrated Plan Of Action To Prevent And Combat Human Trafficking With Special Focus On Children And Women, available at, http://nhrc.nic.in/bib trafficking in women and children.htm (last visited on June 7, 2017).

Also, administering chemical substances or hormones to trafficked women or children for their early sexual maturity or exploitation are liable to be punished in the bill.⁵⁰ Both these penal provisions are welcome as they are dealing with the contemporary ways in which human trafficking is facilitating itself in our society now days. The old laws are proving obsolete to deal with the same. In addition, it deals with a broad category of aggravated forms of trafficking and repeat offences.⁵¹Another notable fact about these penal provisions is that the amount of fine attached with the imprisonment is very high(up to two lakh rupees)⁵² as compared to the fines under the ITPA(a mere sum of two thousand rupees) which can serve as a deterrent onto the perpetrators, which the existing laws were unable to achieve.

Forced rehabilitation to Correction Homes

In a total dismay to the supreme court ruling in BudhadevKarmaskar v. State of West Bengal,⁵³ where the main focus of the apex court was on providing adequate rehabilitation to the sex workers who *voluntarily* want to quit it and thereby providing technical skills and training to them for a better livelihood. Thus, it held that the state is required to provide rehabilitation and vocational training to those prostitutes who voluntarily want to leave prostitution. The Bill treats all sex workers alike, as victims of trafficking. There is no element of voluntariness and autonomy that has been given to the sex workers. In accordance with the current provisions of the Bill, all these assumed victims, upon rescue, are to be sent to rehabilitation homes, even when it means forcing them to go to correction homes. This is an inherent defect in our current legal system that has been rightly inherited in this Bill. This reflects the societal attitude towards prostitution as a profession.

Omissions

Additionally, major omissions of definition of terms like brothel, 'public place' etc. make it evident that this proposed Bill can only supplement the provisions of the existing ITPA as this Bill doesn't deal with the crime of trafficking comprehensively. We already have a plethora of laws enacted by the legislature that prove to be dead letter laws for want of proper

⁵⁰Supra note 12, s. 31(4): Use of chemical substance or hormones for the purpose of exploitation...

⁵¹*Id.*,ss.31-33. ⁵²*Ibid*.

⁵³BudhadevKarmaskar v. State of West Bengal (2011) 10 S.C.R. 577.

implementation. It would be more appropriate to make changes in the existing laws to suit the modern day issues rather than adding to the existing pile of laws. The ITPA should be amended to make it victim oriented and in consonance with our international obligation. The over-riding effect of the 2016 Bill, as was given under section 41 of the old Bill has been done away with in the current Bill. This is a reasonable change as the Bill in its current shape, is inadequate to override the penal provisions related to trafficking in our current legal frame work.

Lastly, another important dimension missing from the proposed Bill is that of criminalisation and prosecution of the victims of trafficking. Human Trafficking violates essential human rights of victims and so their protection from double victimisation at the hands of the state is necessary. Thus, victims of trafficking should not be criminalised for crimes committed by them in the course of their being trafficked. This forms one of the 3P principles of the UN Protocol. This has also been provided in the *United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights* (OHCHR) guidelines on trafficking. Its Principle 7 reads as follows: ⁵⁶

Trafficked persons shall not be detained, charged or prosecuted for the illegality of their entry into or residence in countries of transit and destination, or for their involvement in unlawful activities to the extent that such involvement is a direct consequence of their situation as trafficked persons.

Thus, it is very important to incorporate these guidelines in order to prevent double victimization of the victims of human trafficking.

Hence, it would be more appropriate to focus on the current ITPA and make amendments to it and if at all this Bill has to be passed, it should work as supplemental to ITPA as in no context, and it is comprehensive or sufficient to overlap the existing legal framework on trafficking in India.

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⁵⁴Supra note 12 at, s.59:Act not it derogation of other laws.

⁵⁵Supra note 13.

⁵⁶ "Recommended Principles and Guidelines on Human Rights and Human Trafficking," Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, *available at*, http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/Traffickingen.pdf (last visited on December 12, 2017).

III Current status of the Bill

The 2018 Bill had been placed before the LokSabha by the MWCD on July 18 post which it received the approval of it on July 26 2018. The Ministry of Women and Child Development had invited critique of the 2016 Bill by various stakeholders. The Bill received wide criticism from the sex workers for considering all forms of prostitution as trafficking thereby not recognising the cases of consensual and voluntary sex work.⁵⁷ However, this debate of considering prostitution as sex work or sex slavery has never been settled. In a research, it has been observed that prostitution is not consensual sex work but sexual violence and is similar to other forms of gendered violence that women face at the hands of men.⁵⁸ Further, only the physical health of prostitutes in terms of STDs and AIDS has been given importance in the popular discourse whereas psychological trauma that these women go through goes unaccounted.⁵⁹Keeping this in view and also our Indian social fabric that is essentially patriarchal, accepting voluntary sexual discourse can prove to be a bane instead of boon to the current trafficking scenario of India.

This in turn takes us to an unsettled question of whether sex trafficking includes all forms of prostitution or there is something as "voluntary prostitution" that actually does exist. The International Organization of Migration (IOM) states that both trafficking and prostitution are positively correlated wherein a rise in trafficking is leads to as a rise in prostitution in Europe. ⁶⁰

The US State Dept. recognized that legalized prostitution makes the AHT work difficult. Legalization only leads to expansion as there is a state sanctioning behind this industry that promotes growth in prostitution.⁶¹

The Shadow Report for CEDAW Committee in Australia unravelled the inter-relatedness between trafficking and prostitution. The committee has observed that prostitution is often linked

⁵⁷ Sex workers oppose anti-trafficking bill, *available at*,

https://www.telegraphindia.com/1170128/jsp/nation/story_132745.jsp (last visited on December 12, 2017).

⁵⁸ M Farley and H Barkan, "Prostitution, Violence and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder" 27(3) WHJ 38 (1998).

⁵⁹ Melissa Farley, 2004, Prostitution is sexual violence, Psychiatric Times, *available at*,

http://www.psychiatrictimes.com/sexualoffenses/content/article/10168/48311 (last visited on July 7, 2017).

⁶⁰Dianne Post, "Legalization of prostitution is a violation of Human Right", *available at*, http://heinonline.org/HOL/Page?handle=hein.journals/lieq30&div=5&g_sent=1&collection=journals#21 (last visited on July 6,2017).

⁶¹*Ibid*.

with other criminal activities and the relationship between prostitution and trafficking is intrinsic and they cannot be separated. 62

Thus, we can conclude that sex work sterilises sexual exploitation and such a model cannot be allowed to govern India in its present scenario. Hence, this criticism has not taken note of in the amendments made to the draft Bill.

There is a long way to go before we actually achieve our target of curbing the menace of human trafficking in India. Currently, India is ranked among Tier II countries in dealing with trafficking in persons, meaning that though India has been true in its commitment to combat the evil of human trafficking, it has not been able to adequately deal with the problem of trafficking in persons.⁶³

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⁶³Supra note 21 at 45.

⁶²Shadow Report for CEDAW Committee in Australia, *available at*, http://www.catwa.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/CEDAW-Shadow-Report-2006.pdf (last visited on July 5, 2017).