

2009 ASEAN Workshop on International Legal Cooperation in Trafficking in Persons Cases

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Keynote addresses by Mr. Gary Lewis
UNODC Regional Representative

- Your Excellency, Mr. Sayakane Sisouvong, Deputy Secretary General of ASEAN
- Mr. Melchor Rosales - Chair of the SOMTC working Group on Trafficking in Persons
- Mr. Phillippe Allen - Minister Counsellor of the Australian Agency for International Development;
- Distinguished participants representing the 10 ASEAN Member States
- Observers from International Organizations and Thai Institutions

Good morning to you all and welcome to our ASEAN Workshop on International Legal Cooperation in Trafficking in Persons Cases.

This event marks a significant moment in our development of a true and effective cooperation network to combat the trafficking in persons affecting the ASEAN Member States.

With your presence today – and for the next two days – we witness an increase in the visible commitment to strengthen the cooperation between like-minded countries to reduce the level of impunity currently enjoyed by perpetrators in what I believe is properly called “modern-day slavery”.

Our workshop has been made possible thanks to funding received from the European Union and I would like to acknowledge this contribution right at the outset.

We in UNODC see one of our principal roles as providing technical assistance to the countries that have ratified (or acceded to) the Convention on Transnational Organized Crime – and its Trafficking Protocol.

To date, around 80% of ASEAN Member States have ratified or acceded to the TOC Convention, and around 60% the Trafficking Protocol.

	UNTOC	UNCTOC Protocol 1
Brunei	A	
Cambodia	R	R
Indonesia	R	R
Lao PDR	A	A
Malaysia	R	A
Myanmar	A	A
Philippines	R	R
Singapore	R	
Thailand		
Viet Nam		

Table 1. Ratification within ASEAN Member States, R = ratification, A = accession

This is already a very positive result. But we must do more. For this reason, UNODC will continue assisting countries to develop their legislative frameworks and to provide all relevant support to comply with the provisions of these important instruments.

As you know, among other things, the Trafficking Protocol obliges States Parties to criminalize ‘trafficking in persons’, to protect

victims, to assist them in a meaningful way, and to exchange information at the international level to interdict and prosecute cases of trafficking.

The implementation of the cooperation instruments envisaged in the Protocol is of particular relevance to practitioners like yourselves, who are on the frontline of investigations and prosecutions for trafficking in persons cases.

The Handbook that you will be analyzing and improving during this 3-day event therefore represents an important tool for criminal justice officials in our region. Its aim is to both encourage and enable international cooperation – especially the processes of **mutual legal assistance** and **extradition** – in the investigation and prosecution of the crime of trafficking in persons.

In developing this Handbook, its authors have succeeded in compiling the international, regional and national norms and practices concerning the use of the most important instruments of international cooperation. In so doing, they have offered a practical toolkit to the criminal justice officers of the ASEAN region to work together.

It will now be up to you – law **enforcement officers, prosecutors** and **central authority lawyers** representing ASEAN here today – to improve, to strengthen and to elevate the potential of this Handbook through your deliberations in the coming days.

I am confident that we will be successful. That's the good news.

The better news is that while the Handbook was intended primarily for ASEAN countries, we have noticed that the universality of its operational principles will be of significant benefit also for practitioners in other regions of the world.

This is why I am glad to announce that UNODC will work hand-in-hand with ARTIP (the Asian Regional Trafficking in Persons Project) – which is generously supported by the Government of Australia – to upgrade the geographic breadth of this valuable tool in order to assist criminal justice officers beyond our immediate shores. In fact, I am pleased to note that UNODC has already received requests for this type of product from authorities in other regions of the world.

I would like to conclude with the personal observation. I have watched the evolution of this workshop and I have seen it gather momentum. As it has done so, I have witnessed the names of those agreeing to participate fill the list of resource persons. This is a truly impressive list drawn from all round the region. When I cast my eye around this room, I see the faces of those who will bring a double benefit to our undertaking this week.

For we will not only develop a practical tool to counter trafficking. We will also – through our words and actions – strengthen the network of friends and colleagues who demonstrate a personal commitment to make to all forms of cross-border cooperation on TIP – both formal and informal – work better. This is the essence of true international cooperation to bring the perpetrators of trafficking to face the full force of the law.

Thank you very much. And good luck in your deliberations.