

2<sup>nd</sup> July 2020

**Human Rights Council – 44<sup>th</sup> session**

**ITEM 3 – Report of the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons,  
especially women and children**

Madam President,

Defence for Children International (DCI) welcomes the opportunity to speak and thanks the Special Rapporteur for her significant work during her six years of mandate.

DCI commends the Special Rapporteur for highlighting the need to pay particular attention to child victims of trafficking, especially those unaccompanied. Indeed, they must be treated first and foremost as children and promptly referred to child protection systems.

In Sierra Leone, DCI has been providing training on child trafficking to the Immigration and Transnational Organised Crime Unit and local leaders in the border area between Sierra Leone and Liberia, where the risk of child trafficking is the greatest. Recently, both countries signed a standard operating procedure to combat child trafficking at the Bo Waterside border.

DCI welcomes the recent High Court Judgement in Freetown which convicted perpetrators for trafficking-in-persons (TIP) of nine young Sierra Leonean women to Liberia and onwards to Oman, Iraq and European countries, for their exploitation.

Even if this judgement brings hope for justice, DCI remains concerned that the COVID-19 pandemic has increased the risk of thousands of children to be trafficked and forced into child labour.

We call on Member States:

- to move away from the ambiguous status of trafficked persons in criminal proceedings towards full recognition of victims' rights;
- to apply children's right to be protected, to effectively participate in proceedings, to be heard and kept informed;
- and to ban children's administrative detention at all times.

**Question:**

→ Special Rapporteur, what best practices can be implemented to ensure that all investigations and prosecutions are child sensitive, avoid trauma and stigmatisation?

Thank you.