# Human Trafficking in Panama – Position paper

Human trafficking and forced sexual labor is defined as follows by the United Nations: “The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation.”

The geographic situation of Panama, linking central to south America, as well as the economic situation of the country (Panama being a major harbor center thanks to the Panama canal) makes it not only a destination and a starting point for Trafficking in Persons (TiP), but also a major passageway to countries like Colombia, Venezuela or Nicaragua. Thus, the government of Panama is consistently trying to improve the situation and eradicate TiP through five principal axes, developed in a five-year plan (2017-2022), that reflect the basis lines of the Palermo convention: prevention, protection and prosecution.

The first axis aims to raise awareness, to inform the citizens of the effect of TiP, through campaigns in partnership with media outlets or the sector of tourism for example by promoting the detection of signs of TiP. The next axis addresses the assistance of victims and their being led to complete recovery, whether them being citizens of Panamá in a foreign country or foreigners on national ground, by defending their rights and facilitate their willful return in their homeland. The third axis focuses on the systematic prosecution of victims through the recording of all the complaints and judicial processes, by coordinating the investigating, nationally and internationally, which is when the fourth axis comes in action: international cooperation: the government of Panama estimates it necessary to coordinate the international action in order to establish international mechanisms that can allow the rapid and secure transmission of data, which could also improve investigative techniques, not only nationally but also in other countries. International cooperation is deemed highly important by the government of Panamá, on a global level but also on a more regional level, by aiding the resolution of transboundary crimes, especially with the countries Panamá shares a land border with: Costa Rica and Colombia, which are most often concerned by the TiP in Panamá.

The final goal of the plan is to monitor the implementation of the four other axes, among other with the creation of a permanent commission against TiP.

The government of Panamá wishes to establish a safer environment for its citizens, in order to enhance the living conditions and the economy.