



AHMADU BELLO UNIVERSITY LAW JOURNAL

FACULTY OF LAW

AHMADU BELLO UNIVERSITY, ZARIA - NIGERIA.

website: <https://abulj.org.ng> | e-mail: abulj@abu.edu.ng

THE ROLE OF INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL POLICE ORGANISATION (INTERPOL) IN COMBATING HUMAN TRAFFICKING

OLUWATOSIN O. OGWEZZY*

Abstract

International Criminal Police Organisation (INTERPOL) played a remarkable role in combating human trafficking, a serious violation of human rights that affects millions globally. Traffickers continuously exploit the use of technology to expand their reach and profits while reducing their risk of detection by law enforcement. This entails using digital platforms for recruitment, trafficking coordination, and fraud activities, making it harder for authorities to track and dismantle networks. This paper seeks to examine the role of INTERPOL in the universal fight against human trafficking through various initiatives aimed at enhancing law enforcement capabilities, facilitating international cooperation, and conducting operations that target trafficking networks. INTERPOL aims to streamline efforts against organised crime groups, providing operational and strategic analysis to improve understanding of trafficking routes and trends. This paper aims to examine and expound how INTERPOL helps to fight against human trafficking globally. More specifically, it focuses on Interpol's efforts to support law enforcement agencies worldwide. This paper adopted the doctrinal research method in conducting the present research. This paper found that despite the significant role of INTERPOL in combating human trafficking. It has been identified that traffickers increasingly use sophisticated technological methods, including online scams and fraud, to exploit victims. Traffickers are also disguised as victims to avoid being detected. This paper concluded that INTERPOL has been actively involved in combating human trafficking through various initiatives and operations. This paper recommends that INTERPOL should develop and deploy advanced technological tools, including AI and enhanced data analytics, to better detect and disrupt traffickers' use of online platforms and sophisticated communication methods. It should also intensify efforts to counter technology-facilitated trafficking, such as online recruitment, scams, and abuse, by collaborating with tech companies and improving digital forensics capabilities.

Keywords: ICPO-Interpol, Human Trafficking, Trafficker(s)

1.1 Introduction

The INTERPOL encounters the problem of identifying victims of human trafficking primarily due to traffickers' use of sophisticated, covert methods such as encrypted communications, fake online job offers, and the dark web, which obscure victims' locations and identities.¹ Victims of human trafficking often fear retaliation, distrust authorities, or are manipulated into silence, making them reluctant to reveal their traffickers. This anonymity and victim reluctance complicate detection and rescue efforts.² INTERPOL still tackles adequate protection of victims because human trafficking victims are often overlooked or remain undiscovered. After all, traffickers operate secretly, often using technology to remain anonymous and avoid detection.³ Victims themselves may be unknown to authorities or even to the people they are trafficked with, complicating identification efforts.⁴ This paper seeks to examine and expound how INTERPOL helps to fight against human trafficking globally.

Human trafficking has been among the fastest-growing forms of transnational crime because current world conditions have created increased demand and supply.⁵ The current world conditions like poverty, conflict and climate-induced disasters leave more people vulnerable and make them susceptible to human trafficking to have a better living and job opportunities.⁶ One of the crime areas

*LL.B(OSU),BL,LL.M(Lagos),LL.M(AAUA-Akungba),PhD(RSU-Port Harcourt),ACIarb(Nigeria). Lecturer, Faculty of Law, University of Port Harcourt. Email address: Oluwatosin.ogwezy@uniport.edu.ng,08033273670.

¹INTERPOL, 'The Issues' < <https://www.interpol.int/en/Crimes/Human-trafficking-and-migrant-smuggling/The-issues>> accessed 6 May, 2025.

²INTERPOL (n 1).

³*Ibid.*

⁴*Ibid.*

⁵Louise Sheiley, *Human Trafficking: A Global Perspective* (Cambridge University 2010, USA)2.

⁶UNODC, Press Release UNODC Global Human Trafficking Report Detected Victims up to 25 Percent as More Children are Exploited and Forced Labour Cases Spike< <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/press/releases/2024/December/unodc-global-human->

INTERPOL is dealing with is human trafficking,⁷ Which has always been nefarious and despicable activity. Human trafficking has evolved into a significantly more complex and egregious phenomenon than previously anticipated.⁸

INTERPOL plays a vital role in combating human trafficking through coordinated international efforts. Its coordinated operations are built to strengthen national police forces with the skills and international network required to tackle human trafficking.⁹ INTERPOL has always had one role or the other to play in combating human trafficking globally.¹⁰ Human trafficking is a global crime that trades in people and exploits them for profit.¹¹ Persons of all categories, ages and backgrounds can become victims of this crime, which occurs in every region of the world.¹²

For example, INTERPOL has supported law enforcement agencies in West Africa, both from technical and financial aspects. INTERPOL is also working together to stop human trafficking with initiatives such as the Interpol-Afrapol Operation FLASH-WEKA.¹³ Operation FLASH-WEKA is the first

trafficking-report_-detected-victims-up-25-per-cent-as-more-children-are-exploited-and-forced-labour-cases-spike.html>accessed 6 May,2025.

⁷Global Initiative against Organised Crime, 'INTERPOL' <<https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/interpol/>> accessed 14 January 2025.

⁸Amy Joy, *'Human Trafficking 101: Stories, Stats and Solutions'* (Amy Joy Publishers, United States of America)12.

⁹INTERPOL, 'Operations' <<https://www.interpol.int/en/Crimes/Human-trafficking-and-migrant-smuggling/Operations>>accessed 14 January 2025.

¹⁰AL Sayuti& Others 'Interpol Strategy in Enhancing the Regional Network to Combat Human Trafficking in West Africa' <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/376995173_Interpol's_strategy_in_enhancing_the_regional_network_to_combat_human_trafficking_in_West_Africa>accessed 16 January 2025.

¹¹United Nations Office of Drug and Crime 'Human Trafficking Frequently Asked Questions' <<https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/human-trafficking/faqs.html>> accessed 15 January 2025.

¹²*Ibid.*

¹³Ben Shemang and Mimi Mefo Newuh, Human Trafficking , a Growing Menace for Africa<<https://www.dw.com/en/human-trafficking-a-growing-menace-for-africa/a-66369429>>accessed 5 May, 2025.

cooperation between Interpol and Afripol against human trafficking and police in 54 African nations are involved. It has led to more than 1,000 arrests.¹⁴ Operation FLASH-WEKA unfolded in two distinct phases in May and June 2023. It intends to break down the complex networks of organized crime involved in human trafficking and extend its scope both within Africa and beyond national boundaries.¹⁵

1.2 Conceptual Framework

The efforts of INTERPOL in combating human trafficking have elicited the research interest of several scholars from diverse backgrounds across the globe. Szumski authored an article specifically on the instruments used by INTERPOL in the fight against the international trafficking of human beings, analysing the organisation's key role in international cooperation against human trafficking¹⁶. Resendiz and Espinoza, discuss INTERPOL's collaborative actions within the broader international law enforcement community¹⁷. The above authors provided academic and policy-oriented perspectives on INTERPOL's strategies, instruments, and collaborative efforts in the fight against human trafficking. Consequently, legal and social science scholars have done juridical and scholarly works on different issues that border on human trafficking and INTERPOL. This review examines the opinions of scholars expressed in some existing literature that are relevant to this paper.

¹⁴*Ibid.*

¹⁵*Ibid.*

¹⁶Adrian Szumski, 'Instruments used by Interpol in the Fight against International Trafficking in Human Beings[2016](8)(1) *Internal Security*,59-63 <https://cejsh.icm.edu.pl/cejsh/element/bwmeta1.element.ceon.element-70acc623-5e26-38b3-beac-ac793b9a2ba1> accessed 5 May, 2025.

¹⁷Resendiz, Rosalva, and Lucas E. Espinoza, The International Law Enforcement Community: Cooperative Efforts in Combating Human Trafficking [2024](3)(1), *International Law Discourse* 135-170.,

1.2.1 Human Trafficking

Human trafficking, a human rights violation, is a pressing public health concern that transcends all races, social classes, demographics, and gender.¹⁸ Louise Waite defines, human trafficking as the movement of a person from one place to another or the recruitment and labouring of a person for exploitation.¹⁹ The Interpretation Act²⁰ of Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition)(Enforcement and Administration) Act defines.²¹ that human trafficking involves recruiting, transporting, or harboring people through force, coercion, fraud, or abuse of power for exploitation, including forced labor, slavery, sexual exploitation, or organ removal.²²

The most widely accepted definition of human trafficking is found in the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children(Palermo Protocol), supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime 2000, which defines trafficking in persons as the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring, or receipt of individuals using threat, force, coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, abuse of power or vulnerability, or payments to control another person, for exploitation..²³ Based on the Palermo Protocol definition, trafficking in persons has three constituents' elements, any combination of which (i.e any conduct that combines any listed action and means and is carried out for any of the listed

¹⁸Blue Campaign, 'What is Human Trafficking?'<<https://www.dhs.gov/blue-campaign/what-human-trafficking>>

¹⁹Louise Waite, 'Human Trafficking in International Encyclopedia of Human Geography' (2nd edn 2020)< <https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/social-sciences/human-trafficking>>accessed 15 January 2025 .

²⁰TIPPEAA, s.82.

²¹*Ibid.*

²²*Ibid.*

²³Palermo Protocol, Art.3(a).

purposes) should be criminalised as trafficking.²⁴ This definition of Art 3(a) of the Palermo Protocol aligns with international standards and incorporates key elements such as the means, act, and purpose of trafficking, which are critical for understanding the scope of human and this definition will be adopted in this paper.

1.2.2 Interpol

INTERPOL is an international organisation and group of police officers from over 180 countries who work together to catch criminals who commit crimes across borders. They share information about criminals and help each other solve crimes. Even though they do not have a treaty or official agreement, they are recognised by the United Nations as an important organisation that helps keep people safe.²⁵ For the purpose of this paper, the definition of Legal service database shall be adopted.

1.2.3 Trafficker(s)

Joy defines trafficker as anyone who receives money or something of value for the sexual exploitation of another person.²⁶ According to the interpretation section of the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement and Administration Act(2015) TIPPEAA Act²⁷ a trafficker includes any person or an entity that commits or is in the process of committing, aids, abets, facilitates or acquiesces to an act of trafficking in persons. For the purpose of this paper, the definition of the TIPPEAA 2015 shall be adopted.

²⁴United Nations Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking (UN.GIFT), '023 Workshop: The Effectiveness of Legal frameworks and Anti-Trafficking Legislation 'The Vienna Forum to Fight Human Trafficking 13-18 February, 2008, Austria Centre Vienna, Background paper <<https://www.unodc.org/documents/human-trafficking/2008/BP023TheEffectivenessofLegalFrameworks.pdf>> accessed 18, January 2025.

²⁵LSD, 'International Criminal Organisation<<https://www.lsd.law/define/international-criminal-police-organization>>accesses 18, January 2025.

²⁶Amy Joy,(n 8)145.

²⁷TIPPEAA,s.82.

1.3 History of INTERPOL and Human Trafficking

INTERPOL traces its history to 1914, when a congress of international criminal police, attended by delegates from 14 countries, was held in Monaco.²⁸ In 1923, following a significant increase in international crime that particularly affected Austria, representatives of the criminal police forces of 20 countries met in Vienna and formed the International Criminal Police Commission (ICPC) that year.²⁹ INTERPOL was established to enhance international police cooperation. It was renamed the International Criminal Police Organisation (INTERPOL) in 1956.³⁰

INTERPOL was initially a European organization, drawing only limited support from the United States and other non-European countries. United States involvement in INTERPOL began in 1938, 15 years after the organization's inception.³¹ Under the leadership of French Secretary General Jean Népote (1963–78), INTERPOL became increasingly effective. By the mid-1980s the number of member countries had risen to more than 125, representing all of the world's inhabited continents; by the early 21st century membership had surpassed 180.³² INTERPOL was formed with the foresight of enhancing global police cooperation and ensuring effective international law enforcement.³³

Human trafficking has always been part of human history.³⁴ The first act of human trafficking was recorded in the Holy Bible when Joseph was sold into slavery by his brothers. Forced labour which is a form of human trafficking in the private

²⁸Britannica, 'INTERPOL' <<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Interpol>>accessed 18 January 2025.

²⁹*Ibid.*

³⁰*Ibid.*

³¹*Ibid.*

³²*Ibid.*

³³Human Rights Lawyers, 'History of Interpol and its Main Purpose'< <https://humanrights-lawyer.com/blog/history-of-interpol-and-its-main-purpose/>> accessed 21 January 2025.

³⁴Amy Joy(n 8)12.

economy generates US\$236 billion in illegal profits per year, a new report from the International Labour Organisation (ILO) has found.³⁵ In Nigeria, human trafficking dates back to the 15th century when European Colonialists started the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade in the country. In 1807, the British Parliament banned the slave trade, though human trafficking continued to exist where victims are forced or threatened into sexual and labour exploitation.³⁶ Nigeria is a source, transit and destination country for human trafficking³⁷. Human trafficking encompasses the use of force, fraud, or coercion to obtain some type of labour or commercial sex act. Every year, millions of men, women, and children are trafficked worldwide.³⁸

The Palermo Protocol, formally known as the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, establishes the foundational "3Ps" framework-Prevention, Protection, and Prosecution the modern legal responses to human trafficking are built upon. The "3P" paradigm prosecution, protection, and prevention serves as the fundamental framework used globally to combat human trafficking. With respect to prosecution, effective law enforcement action to identify victims and stop traffickers is an indispensable element of government efforts to fight human trafficking.³⁹ Governments should hold criminally liable all perpetrators of human trafficking, including intermediaries aware of the intended exploitation.⁴⁰ Protection is key to the

³⁵ILO, International Labour Organisation Annual Profits from Forced Labour, amount to US\$236 billion, ILO reports finds <<https://www.ilo.org/resource/news/annual-profits-forced-labour-amount-us-236-billion-ilo-report-finds> accessed 5 May, 2025.

³⁶The Borgen Project, Devatop Centre for African Development Advocates to end- Human Trafficking in Nigeria <<https://borgenproject.org/devatop-centre-for-african-development-advocates-to-end-human-trafficking-in-nigeria/>> accessed 18 January 2025.

³⁷*Ibid.*

³⁸Blue Campaign, 'What is Human Trafficking?' <<https://www.dhs.gov/blue-campaign/what-human-trafficking>> accessed 18 January 2025.

³⁹US, Department of States, 'The 3Ps, Prosecution, Protection and Prevention' <<https://2017-2021.state.gov/the-3ps-prosecution-protection-and-prevention-4/>> accessed 5 May, 2025.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*

victim-centered approach that the international community takes in its efforts to combat human trafficking. Reliable victim support entails proactively identifying victims, providing referrals for a comprehensive array of trauma-informed services, directly providing or funding NGOs to provide those services, and supporting survivors as they rebuild their lives.⁴¹ Strategies to prevent human trafficking are just as crucial as the global initiatives aimed at combating it.⁴² Strong preventative actions target the methods used by human traffickers directly.⁴³ The Palermo Protocol acknowledges the connection between vulnerability and human trafficking and urges state parties to implement or enhance measures aimed at reducing the factors that increase individuals' susceptibility to trafficking.⁴⁴

INTERPOL has been closely observing a growing large-scale human trafficking where victims are lured through fake job advertisements to online scam centres and forced to commit cyber-enabled financial crime on an industrial scale.⁴⁵ INTERPOL in its efforts help law enforcement agencies globally to combat human trafficking through a variety of activities designed to increase their capacity to detect and investigate issues on organised crimes while protecting victims and vulnerable people.⁴⁶

1.4 National Legal Framework for Combating Human Trafficking

The national laws that regulate human trafficking in Nigeria are many but for this paper, the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999, as amended and

⁴¹*Ibid.*

⁴²*Ibid.*

⁴³*Ibid.*

⁴⁴*Ibid.*

⁴⁵INTERPOL, 'Interpol Issues Global Warning on Human Trafficking Fuelled- Fraud.<<https://www.interpol.int/en/News-and-Events/News/2023/INTERPOL-issues-global-warning-on-human-trafficking-fueled-fraud>>accessed 18 January 2025.

⁴⁶INTERPOL, 'Our Response'<<https://www.interpol.int/en/Crimes/Human-trafficking-and-migrant-smuggling/Our-response>> accessed 18 January 2025.

the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement and Administration Act (TIPPEAA) 2015 will be examined.

1.4.1 The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended)

There is a clear credence to the fight against human trafficking by the provisions made in the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended).⁴⁷ The Nigerian Constitution by its provisions has lent credence to the fight against human trafficking. The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria is the supreme grundnorm which has a binding force on every authority and person in Nigeria.⁴⁸ Therefore, since the Constitution enshrines fundamental human rights of the citizens, it is important to consider the relevant provisions of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 (as amended), that fight against human trafficking⁴⁹. This is because human trafficking is a clear violation of the fight against fundamental human rights. Chapter II of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria⁵⁰ contains the fundamental objectives and directive principles of state policy. The sections refer to the maintenance of human rights and the protection against exploitation which human trafficking actively fights against. Section 34 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria⁵¹ guarantees right to dignity of human person. This section prohibits slavery, inhumane and degrading treatment as well as forced labour. The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria has indirectly objected to and disagreed with the concept of human trafficking.⁵²

⁴⁷BE,Ewulum and VC Ossy-Okoye, 'The Legal Implication of Human Trafficking in Nigeria'[2022] (4) (3) *International Review of Law and Jurisprudence*(IRLJ) 80-85< accessed 18,January 2025.

⁴⁸CFRN (as amended) s 1.

⁴⁹CFRN (as amended) s 33-45.

⁵⁰Chapter II, CFRN 1999 (as amended)

⁵¹CFRN, s 34.

⁵²JR,Dyitkuka and O Musa- Agromania 'Critique on the Legal Framework for Combating Human Trafficking in Nigeria' (2023)(11)(1) *Afe Babalola University Law Journal* (ABULJ),97-118.

1.4.2 Trafficking in Person (Prohibition), Enforcement and Administration Act (TIPPEAA) 2015

The objectives of the TIPPEAA as stated in section 1 are to provide an effective and comprehensive legal and institutional framework for the prohibition, prevention, detection, prosecution and punishment of human trafficking and related offences in Nigeria; protect victims of human trafficking and promote and facilitate national and international cooperation to meet the objectives of the TIPPEAA in line with international best practice.⁵³ Section 13(1) of the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement and Administration Act⁵⁴ generally prohibited all acts of human trafficking in Nigeria. It provided that any person who recruits, transports, transfers, harbours or receives another person using fraud, force, abuse of authority, deception, payment or receiving of money for the exploitation of that person commits an offence is liable on conviction to a term of not less than 2 years imprisonment and a fine not less than ₦250,000. Section 13(4)⁵⁵ makes guilty any person whether within or outside Nigeria that does or omits to do or threaten; induce by fraud; act by proxy; aid or abet, assist or facilitate the commission of any offence under Act, and such a person upon conviction shall be liable to a term of imprisonment for not less than 5 years and a fine not less than 1million. In Nigeria, the maximum sentence for human trafficking is 7 years which is too short compare to to what is obtainable in other countries like South Africa and Sierra Leon whose legal framework provides for longer sentences of 10 years, 25 years and life imprisonment on cases on human trafficking. The provided years of imprisonment and the fine for the recruiter, transporter and receiver in Nigeria are not too harsh, which is the main reason why the crime is still thriving, therefore there is a need to increase the number of years for imprisonment and including the payment of fines to deter traffickers.

⁵³TIPPEAA, s1.

⁵⁴TIPPEAA, s 13.

⁵⁵TIPPEAA, s 13(4).

In the case of *FRN v. Mercy Ukor Omebere*, Mercy Ukor Omebere was found guilty of recruiting and trafficking 12 Nigerian girls to Belgium for sexual exploitation. She was convicted on all 24 charges and sentenced to 12 years on different charges for the offence of human trafficking in prison along with a fine of 24 million naira on October 3, 2023. Also, a high-profile conviction in 2023 by Nigerian anti-human trafficking authorities where they arrested Christiana Uadiale, a subject of International Consortium of Investigative Journalist (ICIJ's) 2023 Trafficking Inc. investigation, at the Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport, Abuja, on Tuesday, New Year's Eve. Uadiale, also known as "Christy Gold," was arrested after a Federal High Court in Nigeria convicted her in absentia on March 21 on a six-count charge of trafficking in persons.⁵⁶ The courts in Nigeria have been making frantic efforts to deter human traffickers from the crime of human trafficking but higher sentences are still needed to be meted out to human traffickers to curb the menace.

South Africa imposes some of the harshest penalties for human trafficking offences on the continent. Recent landmark cases have resulted in multiple life sentences plus additional decades of imprisonment. The Western Cape division of the High Court has on 15 November 2024 sentenced⁵⁷ Edward Ayuk (44) Leander Williams Ayuk (40) and Yannick Ayuk (34) separately to six life sentences and 410 years imprisonment for trafficking in persons.⁵⁸ The Criminal Law Amendment Act 105 of 1997 mandates a minimum sentence of life imprisonment for trafficking in persons for sexual purposes, with other related offences carrying minimum sentences ranging from 10 to 15 years. Such stringent

⁵⁶Carmen Molina Acosta, 'Nigeria Arrest Human Trafficker Spotlight by International Consortium of Investigative Journalist' < <https://www.icij.org/investigations/trafficking-inc/nigeria-arrests-human-trafficker-spotlit-by-icij/>>

⁵⁷Case Number: CC46/2019

⁵⁸South African Police Service, 'Trio Sentenced to Hefty Jail Terms' < <https://www.saps.gov.za/newsroom/msspeechdetail.php?nid=57191>>accessed 5 May,2025.

sentencing reflects South Africa's commitment to deterrence, retribution, and prevention.

1.5 Key International Frameworks Governing INTERPOL and Human Trafficking

INTERPOL helps law enforcement agencies fight human trafficking through information sharing, analysis, and cooperation. The key international laws that regulate human trafficking are as follows.

1.5.1 United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime (UNTOC)

The United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime (UNTOC) and INTERPOL play pivotal roles in combating organised crime on a global scale. Their collaboration focuses on enhancing international cooperation, information sharing, and operational support to member states. The United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime, adopted by General Assembly resolution 55/25 of 15 November 2000, is the main international instrument in the fight against transnational organised crime.⁵⁹

The Convention represents a major step forward in the fight against transnational organised crime and signifies the recognition by member states of the seriousness of the problems posed by it, as well as the need to foster and enhance close international cooperation to tackle those problems.⁶⁰ States that ratify this instrument commit themselves to take a series of measures against transnational organised crime, including the creation of domestic criminal offences (participation in an organised criminal group, money laundering, corruption and

⁵⁹UNODC, UN Convention against Transnational Organised Crime and the Protocols Thereto<
<https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/organized-crime/intro/UNTOC.html>>accessed 18
January, 2025.

⁶⁰*Ibid.*

obstruction of justice); the adoption of new and sweeping frameworks for extradition, mutual legal assistance and law enforcement cooperation; and the promotion of training and technical assistance for building or upgrading the necessary capacity of national authorities.⁶¹ Specific provisions of UNTOC will be analysed as regards the international law that governs human trafficking and INTERPOL on the above Convention.

UNTOC emphasises the need for states to criminalise various offenses related to organised crime, including money laundering.⁶² This provision⁶³ mandates that each State Party adopt measures to criminalise the laundering of proceeds derived from serious crimes. This important aspect of the provision targets the financial aspects of organised crime, including human trafficking. Another provision of UNTOC⁶⁴ emphasises the need for effective law enforcement measures to combat organised crime, including human trafficking. This provision of law emphasises the need for effective law enforcement measures to combat organised crime, including human trafficking.

The Convention⁶⁵ fosters a collaborative approach among states, which is essential given the transnational nature of organised crime. By facilitating information sharing, it enhances collective efforts to combat trafficking. It focuses on distinguishing between victims and perpetrators. This focus aligns with international human rights standards and ensures that victims are treated with dignity and respect. The Convention⁶⁶ emphasis on training, equips law enforcement agencies with the necessary skills and knowledge to tackle complicated trafficking cases.

⁶¹*Ibid.*

⁶²UNTOC, Art6-7.

⁶³UNTOC, Art 6.

⁶⁴UNTOC, Art 7.

⁶⁵*Ibid.*

⁶⁶*Ibid.*

1.5.2 The Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (Palermo Protocol) supplements UNTOC

The Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (commonly known as the Palermo Protocol) is a key international legal instrument aimed at combating human trafficking. It supplements the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime (UNTOC). The Protocol add to the adoption of new laws and policies, increased cooperation between countries, and improved support for victims.⁶⁷

The Palermo Protocol defines "trafficking in persons" as the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring, or receipt of persons through means such as force, coercion, fraud, or deception for exploitation. Exploitation includes sexual exploitation, forced labour, slavery, and organ removal.⁶⁸ States Parties are obligated to criminalise trafficking in persons ⁶⁹in accordance with the definition provided in the Palermo Protocol.⁷⁰ This ensures that trafficking is recognised as a serious crime under national laws.

The Palermo Protocol also calls for comprehensive measures to prevent trafficking, including public awareness campaigns, research, and cooperation with non-governmental organisations (NGOs).⁷¹ States are encouraged to address foundational causes that make individuals vulnerable to trafficking, such as poverty and lack of opportunity.⁷² The Protocol emphasises the importance of international cooperation in combating trafficking through information sharing

⁶⁷Pramit Chandra Rout and Others, Analysing the Palermo protocol on Human trafficking: Implementation, Efficacy and Challenges[2024](VI)(1)*Indian journal of Law and Legal Research*, 1-8.

⁶⁸Palermo Protocol, Art 3.

⁶⁹Palermo Protocol, Art 5.

⁷⁰*Ibid.*

⁷¹Palermo Protocol, Art.6.

⁷²*Ibid.*

and mutual legal assistance. States are encouraged to collaborate on investigations and prosecutions related to trafficking offences.

1.5.3 The Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) of 1948, which declares that "No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms."⁷³ This important article deals with the prohibition of slavery and forced labour. This article demonstrates the international community's commitment to protecting individual freedoms and human dignity. This provision is absolute and non-derogable, meaning it allows no exceptions or justifications, slavery and servitude are banned under all circumstances.⁷⁴ The UDHR's Article 4 has inspired binding international treaties, such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and is reflected in national laws worldwide.⁷⁵

It must be noted that the UDHR is a non-binding resolution of the General Assembly of the United Nations. It has no binding effect.⁷⁶ It was adopted as a non-binding resolution by the UN General Assembly in 1948, meaning it does not impose legal obligations on states by itself.⁷⁷ At the national level, the UDHR has been incorporated into or influenced numerous constitutions and laws worldwide. Courts and governments often invoke it as a guiding standard, and some countries explicitly reference it in their constitutions.⁷⁸ UDHR has been incorporated into

⁷³UDHR, Art.4.

⁷⁴Equality and Human Rights Commission, 'Article 4: Freedom from Slavery and Forced Labour' <<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/human-rights/human-rights-act/article-4-freedom-slavery-and-forced-labour>> accessed 7 May, 2025.

⁷⁵ICPC, Art 8.

⁷⁶John Dugard, 'The Influence of the Universal Declaration as Law' [2009(24)(1) *Maryland Journal of International Law*, 85.

⁷⁷*Ibid.*

⁷⁸Hurst Hannum, 'The UDHR in National and International Law' [1998(3)(1) *Health Hum Rights*, 145.

Nigerian law primarily through the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, especially in Chapter IV, which guarantees fundamental human rights. These constitutional provisions reflect key UDHR principles such as the right to dignity, freedom from torture, degrading treatment or punishment in Art. 5 which is equivalent to section 34 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.⁷⁹ The provision above touches on human trafficking where victims are subjected to degrading treatment when victims of human trafficking are being moved from one country to another to live a better life and get opportunities.

1.5.4 The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 1966 (ICCPR)

The ICCPR of 1966, in Article 8 states that " 1. No one shall be held in slavery; slavery and the slave trade in all their forms shall be prohibited. 2. No one shall be held in servitude. 3. No one shall be required to perform forced or compulsory labour."

The ICCPR,⁸⁰ prohibits slavery, servitude, and forced or compulsory labour, forming a critical legal foundation for addressing human trafficking.⁸¹ Slavery and servitude are un-waiverable under ICCPR,⁸² leaving no exceptions for trafficking-related abuses.⁸³ The UN Human Rights Committee has broadened

⁷⁹Florence O. Orabueze and Ifeyinwa Ogbazi, 'The Inscription of Fundamental Rights and the Libration of Igbo Woman from Customary and Administrative Burden's,[2014](14)(2), *Unizik Journal of Arts and Humanities*7.

⁸⁰ICCPR, Art 8.

⁸¹Australian Human Rights Commission, 'Freedom From slavery and Forced Labour' <<https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/rights-and-freedoms/freedom-slavery-and-forced-labour>>accessed 7 May, 2025.

⁸²ICCPR ,Art 8(1)(2).

⁸³Kart Promeister, 'The Legal Concept of Slavery in Modern European Legal Sphere'<https://www.juridicainternational.eu/article_full.php?uri=2014_21_130_the-legal-concept-of-slavery-in-the-modern-european-legal-sphere-2>accessed 6 May, 2025

Article 8's scope to include "disguised" slavery, such as trafficking, forced prostitution, and exploitative domestic servitude.⁸⁴

This article is a crucial element in the framework of human rights protections established by the ICCPR, reflecting the commitment of state parties to uphold individual freedoms and dignity.⁸⁵ This provision unequivocally prohibits all forms of slavery and servitude, emphasising that such practices are intolerable and must be eradicated.⁸⁶ The inclusion of both slavery and servitude highlights a comprehensive approach to addressing various forms of exploitation. This provision ensures that individuals cannot be coerced into work against their will, which is essential for protecting personal autonomy and freedom.⁸⁷

1.5.5 The Convention to Suppress the Slave Trade and Slavery of 1926

The Convention to Suppress the Slave Trade and Slavery of 1926, which states in Article (2) that the parties agreed "to prevent and suppress the slave trade" and "to progressively bring about the complete elimination of slavery in all its forms." , Article 2(a) mandates that State Parties take measures to prevent and suppress the slave trade in all its forms. This includes addressing both the capture, transportation, and sale of individuals as slaves, as well as any acts facilitating such practices.⁸⁸ Article 2(b) requires State Parties to work towards the progressive and complete abolition of slavery in all its forms as soon as possible.⁸⁹ This recognises that immediate eradication may not have been feasible

⁸⁴*Ibid.*

⁸⁵ICCPR, Art 8(1).

⁸⁶ICCPR, Art 8(2).

⁸⁷*Ibid.*

⁸⁸United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, 'Slavery Convention' <<https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/slavery-convention>>accessed 19 January 2025.

⁸⁹*Ibid.*

at the time due to entrenched systems, but it emphasises a clear commitment to eliminating slavery.

1.5.6 The Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery of 1956

The Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery of 1956 is directly connected to debt bondage and serfdom by explicitly identifying and targeting them as practices to be abolished. The Convention⁹⁰ obliges states parties to take all necessary measures to abolish or abandon debt bondage and serfdom, among other practices, where they still exist. Debt bondage is identified as a “practice similar to slavery” but it is not actual slavery.⁹¹ It is a practice like slavery because it involves a debt that cannot be paid off in a reasonable time. The employer/enforcer who engages in this criminal practice artificially inflates the amount of debt, often by adding exorbitant interest, deducting little or nothing from the debt and increasing the amount of time the so-called debtor must work. An example of debt bondage is evident in this situation, for example in Nigeria, traffickers require women to sign a “contract” with a sponsor.⁹² A priest blesses the contract “with a ritual called *juju*.”⁹³ The women are then smuggled to Europe.⁹⁴ Once they arrive: the victims are already under the control of the criminal organisations, and sexually exploited by being forced into prostitution to pay back the debt contracted with the sponsor. The belief in the power of the *juju* ritual as well as threats to family

⁹⁰Art.1

⁹¹Ann Jordan, Slavery ‘Forced Labour, Debt Bondage and Human Trafficking: From Conceptual Confusion to Targeted Solutions’ [2011](2) *Centre for Human Rights and Humanitarian Law* <<https://search.issuelab.org/resource/slavery-forced-labor-debt-bondage-and-human-trafficking-from-conceptual-confusion-to-targeted-solutions.html>> accessed 9 May, 2025

⁹²The Advocates for Human Rights, Stop Violence against Women: A Project for the Advocates of Human Rights <https://www.stopvaw.org/debt_bondage> accessed 7 May, 2025.

⁹³*Ibid.*

⁹⁴*Ibid.*

members back home normally secure the loyalty of the victims.⁹⁵ when the victims' debt could amount to some 40,000 - 70,000 euros that would cover the travel expenses and the protection. The debt will rise for additional expenses, investigators reveal that just 10,000 euros are spent by the organisation to transfer the victim to Europe.⁹⁶

1.5.7 Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of Prostitution of Others of 1949.

The Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of Prostitution of Others of 1949. The Preamble to this Convention provided that " *Whereas prostitution and the accompanying evil of traffic in persons for the purpose of prostitution are incompatible with the dignity and worth of the human person and endanger the welfare of the individual, the family and the community*" The Preamble of the Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of Prostitution of Others states that "prostitution and the accompanying evil of the traffic in persons for prostitution are incompatible with the dignity and worth of the human person." This assertion reflects a fundamental human rights perspective, positioning both prostitution and trafficking as violations of individual dignity. The Preamble advocates for a moral and ethical stance against practices that exploit individuals, particularly women and children.

Another important provision of the Convention is Article 17 which provides that State parties are required to " *undertake, in connection with immigration and emigration, to adopt or maintain such measures as are required, in terms of their obligations under the present Convention, to check the traffic in persons of either sex for the purpose of prostitution.*" Article 17 mandates that State Parties

⁹⁵*Ibid.*

⁹⁶*Ibid.*

undertake measures related to immigration and emigration to prevent trafficking in persons for prostitution. This includes implementing policies that address the vulnerabilities that may lead individuals to become victims of trafficking. The article specifies that measures must apply to "persons of either sex," highlighting the recognition that trafficking affects all genders and that both men and women can be victims.

1.5.8 The Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989

The Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989, which states that states parties must "*take all appropriate national, bilateral and multilateral measures to prevent the abduction of, the sale of or traffic in children for any purpose or in any form*" is a landmark international treaty that outlines the civil, political, economic, social, health, and cultural rights of children. Among its various provisions, the CRC addresses the critical issue of child trafficking, emphasising the need for protection and prevention measures. This provision implicitly addresses trafficking by acknowledging that children should not be subjected to exploitative labour practices, which often include trafficking scenarios.

1.5.9 Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in respect of Inter-Country Adoption of 1993

The Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in respect of Inter-Country Adoption of 1993. The Hague Convention provides in Article 32 that "*No one shall derive improper financial or other gain from an activity related to an inter- country adoption*". This article emphasizes the importance of enforcing compliance with the Convention's standards to ensure that inter-country adoptions are conducted ethically and in the best interests of the child. The best interest of the child is a fundamental principle in child rights law, primarily derived from Article 3 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). This principle asserts that in all actions concerning children

whether undertaken by public or private entities the best interests of the child must be a primary consideration.

International efforts, such as the Hague Convention on Inter-country Adoption, aim to regulate and standardise adoption practices, but not all countries are signatories or can implement its provisions fully.⁹⁷ In Nigeria, Children are at risk of being trafficked through inter-country adoption. Multiple international authorities, including the U.S. Department of State and the Scottish Government, have documented evidence of organized child trafficking within Nigeria's adoption system. Because of systemic fraud and poor record-keeping identified around inter-country adoptions in Nigeria, processing times for adoption cases are seriously delayed.⁹⁸ Many adoptees have been found unsuitable for an immigrant visa following the denial of the underlying orphan petition (I-600) because the child did not meet the definition of orphan under immigration law.⁹⁹ In cases where the immigration petition is denied, even if the adoption is legally completed in Nigeria, our Consular Officers in Nigeria will not be able to issue the child a visa to immigrate to the United States.¹⁰⁰

1.5.10 The ILO Convention No 182 on the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour of 1999

The ILO Convention NO 182 explicitly identifies human trafficking as one of the 'worst form of child Labour' requiring urgent elimination. The ILO Convention No 182 on the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour of

⁹⁷Tamsen Rochat and Linda Richter 'International Adoption, Benefits ,Risks and vulnerabilities' <<https://perspectives.waimh.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/9/2017/05/Zero-to-Three-Corner.-International-Adoption-Benefits-Risks-and-Vulnerabilities.pdf>>accessed 8 May 2025.

⁹⁸US Department of State, Ongoing Concerns Related to Inter- Country Adoptions in Nigeria <<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/News/Inter-country-Adoption-News/ongoing-concerns-related-to-intercountry-adoptions-from-nigeria.html>>accessed 8 May,2025.

⁹⁹*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰*Ibid.*

1999, which provides in Article 3 " *all forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery such as the sale and trafficking of children*". This article is essential for guiding member states in their efforts to protect children from exploitation and harmful work conditions.

Nigeria is legally bound by ILO Convention NO.182 and has taken steps toward compliance, the Convention's strong force in practice is limited by ongoing conflict, insecurity and implementation gaps. For instance, the three conflict-affected states in North East Nigeria, namely, Adamawa, Borno and Yobe which highlights grave violations against children committed by the terrorist groups – Boko Haram.¹⁰¹ The ILO and international community urge Nigeria to adopt more effective, time-bound measures to protect children from the worst forms of child labor and to strengthen enforcement and rehabilitation efforts.

1.5.11 The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court of 1998

The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court of 1998, which defines in Article 7 " *Crimes against Humanity* " to include " *Enslavement* " which means " *the exercise of any and all of the powers attaching to the right of ownership over a person, in particular women and children.*" Adopted in 1998, defines crimes against humanity and outlines the conditions under which such acts are recognised as international crimes. This article is significant for establishing a legal framework for prosecuting individuals responsible for egregious violations of human rights committed as part of widespread or systematic attacks against civilian populations. One of the cases of crimes against humanity was evident in Lubanga's case in Congo where the International Criminal Court (ICC) convicted Thomas Lubanga who led the Union of Congolese Patriots (UPC), an ethnic Hema

¹⁰¹ILO, Individual Case (CAS) - Discussion: 2023, Publication: 111st ILC session (2023) *Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182) - Nigeria (Ratification: 2002)*, <https://normlex.ilo.org/dyn/nrmlx_en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:13100:0::NO::P13100_COMMENT_ID%2CP13100_COUNTRY_ID:4348291%2C103259> accessed 8 May, 2025.

militia that was active in the war that started in the Ituri region in North-Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo in 1999.¹⁰² The court convicted him of recruiting and sending children under 15 years old to the battlefield and the accused was to 14 years imprisonment.

1.6 Challenges Confronting INTERPOL in Combating Human Trafficking

INTERPOL faces several significant challenges in its efforts to combat human trafficking, a convoluted and evolving crime that affects millions worldwide. These challenges are exacerbated by the dynamic nature of trafficking networks and the socioeconomic factors that drive individuals into vulnerable situations. INTERPOL's combat against human trafficking is faced with evolving criminal methodologies, globalization-induced vulnerabilities, resource disparities among member states, and the necessity for improved intelligence sharing. Addressing these challenges requires robust international cooperation and innovative strategies to protect victims while effectively dismantling trafficking networks.

One of the challenges confronting INTERPOL in combating human trafficking is that human traffickers have shifted from traditional exploitation methods such as forced labour, sexual slavery, coercion, and use of force to more sophisticated operations, such as luring victims through fake job advertisements and forcing them into cyber-enabled financial crimes.¹⁰³ This shift complicates detection and enforcement for INTERPOL, as these crimes often occur in digital spaces that provide anonymity for traffickers.¹⁰⁴ Economic hardship around the world, conflict, and climate change have created more vulnerable populations and complicated INTERPOL's efforts to track complex trafficking

¹⁰²BBC News, 'Profile Dr. Congo Militia Leader Thomas Lubanga' <<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-17358799>> accessed 8 May 2025.

¹⁰³INTERPOL, INTERPOL Issues Global Warning on Human Trafficking-Fuelled Fraud' <<https://www.interpol.int/en/News-and-Events/News/2023/INTERPOL-issues-global-warning-on-human-trafficking-fueled-fraud>> accessed 21 January, 2025.

¹⁰⁴*Ibid.*

routes.¹⁰⁵ INTERPOL is also faced with the challenge of limited resources. Many countries lack the potential or political intent to prioritise anti-trafficking measures, leading to gaps in enforcement and intelligence exchange.¹⁰⁶

1.7 Key Tools and Databases by INTERPOL to Combating Human Trafficking

INTERPOL has developed a range of tools and technologies aimed at combating human trafficking, particularly as traffickers increasingly exploit digital platforms. This analysis highlights several key initiatives and technologies that INTERPOL employs to enhance its operational capacity and facilitate international cooperation in addressing human trafficking.

INTERPOL's I-24/7 Communication Network is a crucial tool in the fight against human trafficking, facilitating real-time information sharing and enhancing international cooperation among law enforcement agencies.¹⁰⁷ The I-24/7 network allows law enforcement agencies from all 196 member countries to communicate securely and rapidly.¹⁰⁸ This capability is essential for sharing urgent intelligence related to human trafficking cases, such as alerts about trafficking routes or profiles of suspected traffickers.¹⁰⁹ Through the INTERPOL communication system, on average, some 30 million messages are exchanged every year among law enforcement, the INTERPOL General Secretariat and other authorized agencies.¹¹⁰ The sheer volume and importance of these messages

¹⁰⁵*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶INTERPOL 'Our Response' < <https://www.interpol.int/en/Crimes/Human-trafficking-and-migrant-smuggling/Our-response> >

¹⁰⁷INTERPOL, 'Somali Connection Completes INTERPOL's I-24/7 Communication Network' < <https://www.interpol.int/ar/1/1/2007/Somali-connection-completes-INTERPOL-s-I-24-7-communications-network> > accessed 21 January 2025.

¹⁰⁸*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹*Ibid.*

¹¹⁰INTERPOL, 15th meeting of the COP-UNTOC Working Group on International Cooperation Item 2. The Role and Impact of Technology with Regard to International Cooperation in Criminal Matters: Opportunities, challenges and capacity-building needs.5 and 6 June 2024,

necessitated a sophisticated management system, which has led INTERPOL to develop the Smart Case Messaging (SCM) system. The international child sexual exploitation Database is designed to facilitate the identification of victims and offenders involved in sexual exploitation.¹¹¹ It enables law enforcement agencies to share information and collaborate effectively across borders. The ICSE database is a ground-breaking tool to advance child exploitation investigations through strengthened global information sharing.¹¹² The use of image and video comparison software, allows investigators to make connections between victims, abusers and places.¹¹³ The database avoids duplication of effort and saves precious time by letting investigators know whether a series of images has already been discovered or identified in another country or whether it has already been discovered or identified in another country or whether it has similar features to other images.¹¹⁴ It also enables specialised investigators from over 70 countries to collaborate and share information effortlessly with their counterparts globally.¹¹⁵

The Criminal databases contain millions of records with information on individuals such as names and fingerprints; stolen property such as passports and vehicles; and weapons and threats such as firearms.¹¹⁶ National police can explore

Vienna<https://www.unodc.org/documents/treaties/International_Cooperation_2024/Statements/20240529_INTERPOL_Statement_WG_Intl_Cooperation.pdf>accessed 8 May,2025.

¹¹¹INTERPOL , ‘Secretary General, more Specialist Units Needed to Investigate Online Child Abuse’< <https://www.interpol.int/en/News-and-Events/News/2022/INTERPOL-Secretary-General-More-specialist-units-needed-to-investigate-online-child-abuse>>accessed 20 January,2025.

¹¹² INTERPOL, Australian Support to Enhance INTERPOL database to combat On line Child Abuse< <https://www.interpol.int/en/News-and-Events/News/2022/Australian-support-for-enhanced-INTERPOL-database-to-combat-online-child-abuse>> accessed 20January ,2025.

¹¹³INTERPOL, International Child Sexual exploitation data base<<https://www.interpol.int/en/Crimes/Crimes-against-children/International-Child-Sexual-Exploitation-database>>accessed 8 May, 2025.

¹¹⁴*Ibid*

¹¹⁵*Ibid*

¹¹⁶INTERPOL ‘Databases’< <https://www.interpol.int/en/How-we-work/Databases>>

databases in real - time as part of their investigations. This can be done via their INTERPOL National Central Bureau, or directly at the front-line, for instance by specialized crime units and border officials.¹¹⁷

INTERPOL's Stolen and Lost Travel Documents (SLTD) Database is a critical tool in combating human trafficking by enhancing the ability of law enforcement agencies to detect and prevent the misuse of fraudulent travel documents. The SLTD Database contains records of over 120 million travel and identity documents reported as stolen, lost, or invalid from more than 170 countries.¹¹⁸ This extensive database helps law enforcement agencies quickly verify the authenticity of travel documents presented at borders and checkpoints.¹¹⁹

1.8 Major Initiatives used by INTERPOL in Combating Human Trafficking

INTERPOL has implemented several major initiatives aimed at combating human trafficking and migrant smuggling globally. This initiative focuses on enhancing cooperation among member countries, improving investigative capabilities, and directly addressing the needs of victims. The following are major initiatives used by INTERPOL in combating human trafficking.

Project Turquesa is a collaborative initiative launched by INTERPOL and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) aimed at combating human trafficking and migrant smuggling in the Americas. Project Turquesa is a two-and-a-half-year initiative funded by the Government of Canada through its Anti-Crime Capacity Building Programme.¹²⁰ The one and a half year is for a period

¹¹⁷*Ibid.*

¹¹⁸INTERPOL Stop, 'How does INTERPOL SLTD Database work?'< <https://interpol-stop.com/en/blog-en/interpol-sltd-database/>>accessed 21 January 2025.

¹¹⁹*Ibid.*

¹²⁰INTERPOL, 'Americas: New Joint Initiative against Human Trafficking and Migrant'< Smuggling<<https://www.interpol.int/en/News-and-Events/News/2023/Americas-New-joint-initiative-against-human-trafficking-and-migrant-smuggling> accessed 26 January 2025.

between April 2023 to September 2025.¹²¹ The initiative has led to nearly 800 arrests, identification of thousands of victims, and initiated 270 new investigations. It also focuses on gender considerations and the rights of victims and migrants.¹²² The operation Liberterra 11 is one of INTERPOL's largest efforts against human trafficking. It involved extensive police raids and monitoring of flights. The operation, which was carried out across 116 countries between 29 September to 4 October 2024, led to the rescue of 3,222 potential trafficking victims and identified 17,800 irregular migrants.¹²³ The operation rescued over 3,200 potential victims and identified nearly 18,000 irregular migrants, with more than 2,500 arrests made during the operation.¹²⁴

Operation CARIBBE has strengthened its operational capacity in the Caribbean through joint initiatives involving countries like the Dominican Republic, Haiti, and Jamaica.¹²⁵ Operation CARIBBE which began in November 2006 as Canada's commitment to the U.S.-led Campaign MARTILLO, a multinational initiative aimed at disrupting transnational criminal organizations involved in

¹²¹INTERPOL, Project Turquesa: Fighting Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling in America <<https://www.interpol.int/en/Crimes/Human-trafficking-and-migrant-smuggling/Projects/Project-Turquesa>> accessed 8 May, 2025.

¹²²*Ibid.*

¹²³United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime, Global Raids Rescue 3200 Potential Victims of Human Trafficking and Identify 17800 Irregular Migrants <<https://www.unodc.org/unodc/news/2024/November/global-raids-rescue-3-200-potential-victims-of-human-trafficking-and-identify-17-800-irregular-migrants.html>> accessed 8 May, 2025.

¹²⁴INTERPOL, 'Global Raids Rescue 3,200 Potential Victims of Trafficking and Identify 17,800 Irregular Migrants' <<https://www.interpol.int/en/News-and-Events/News/2024/Global-raids-rescue-3-200-potential-victims-of-trafficking-and-identify-17-800-irregular-migrants>> accessed 26 January 2025.

¹²⁵FIIAPP, INTERPOL's Joint Anti-trafficking and Anti-Smuggling <<https://www.fiiapp.org/en/noticias/interpol-s-joint-anti-trafficking-and-anti-smuggling-operations/>> accessed 26 January 2025

drug trafficking, weapons smuggling, and human trafficking across the Caribbean basin and eastern Pacific.¹²⁶

The Digital Operations Against Cyber-Enabled Trafficking is a recent initiative targeted at combating human trafficking through digital platforms. This operation utilised facial recognition technology to identify potential victims and traffickers.¹²⁷ The operation involved the use of facial recognition technology, for example, police in the Netherlands and Venezuela collected facial images of women advertised as Venezuelan escorts on European websites and ran them against Interpol databases for matches with historic “Blue Notices.”¹²⁸ An Interpol Blue Notice is designed to collect additional details about a person suspected of a crime, including their identity, location, and activities.¹²⁹ This type of notice plays a vital role in international investigations, helping law enforcement identify connections and patterns. Blue Notices are commonly issued to locate fugitives, witnesses, or victims of crimes.¹³⁰ The Blue Notice focuses on gathering information.¹³¹ A blue notice is not an arrest warrant and does not require or authorise the detention of the individual concerned.¹³² Issuance of blue notice must comply with

¹²⁶Ready Aye Ready, Operation Carribbe: A Legal Maritime Safety <<https://readyayeready.com/operation-caribbe-a-legacy-of-maritime-security/>> accessed 9 May, 2025.

¹²⁷Info Security Magazine, ‘Interpol Identifies Over 140 Human Traffickers in New Initiative’ <<https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/interpol-identifies-140-human/>> accessed 26 January 2025.

¹²⁸*Ibid.*

¹²⁹Collegium of International Lawyers, ‘Blue Notice Interpol in the UAE’ <<https://dubaixtradition.com/services/blue-notice-in-dubai/>> access 9 May, 2025.

¹³⁰*Ibid.*

¹³¹*Ibid.*

¹³²Konstantina Zivlva, Inter Blue Notice-how it Defers from Red <<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/interpol-blue-notice-differences-red-konstantina-zivla-aklef>> accessed 9 May, 2025.

INTERPOL's Constitution including political, neutral and respect for human rights and cannot be used for military, race and political persecution.¹³³

With respect to data privacy on issuance of blue notice under interpol rules, INTERPOL operations which was formally recognized as early as 1974¹³⁴ wherein at INTERPOL's General Assembly a resolution entitled "Privacy of Information", was adopted which urged National Central Bureau (NCBs) and the General Secretariat to take into account the privacy of the individual when exchanging criminal justice information.¹³⁵ This robust set of rules ensures the efficiency and quality of international cooperation between criminal police authorities through INTERPOL channels as well as due respect for the basic rights of the individuals who are subjects of this cooperation.¹³⁶ Considering the ethical concerns of the privacy of information of an individual arrested by INTERPOL about facial recognition. Interpol in carrying out its role processes sensitive biometric data, including facial images, which raises significant privacy concerns. To address this, Interpol operates under strict data processing rules ensuring data accuracy, confidentiality, and restricted access to authorised law enforcement agencies only.¹³⁷ The process used is governed by a robust legal framework that respects fundamental human rights and international data protection standards.¹³⁸

¹³³INTERPOL, 'About Notices' <<https://www.interpol.int/en/How-we-work/Notices/About-Notices>> accessed 9 May, 2025.

¹³⁴INTERPOL, 'Data Protection' <<https://www.interpol.int/en/Who-we-are/Legal-framework/Data-protection>> accessed 9 May, 2025.

¹³⁵*Ibid.*

¹³⁶*Ibid.*

¹³⁷INTERPOL, 'Facial Recognition' <<https://www.interpol.int/en/How-we-work/Forensics/Facial-Recognition>> accessed 9 May, 2025.

¹³⁸ United nation Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNCRI), a policy Framework for responsible limits on Facial recognition. use case law Enforcement Investigations - November 2022. <<https://unicri.org/A-Policy-Framework%20-for-Responsible-Limits-on-Facial-Recognition>> accessed 9 May, 2025.

1.9 Role of INTERPOL in Combating Human Trafficking

The role of INTERPOL is multidimensional and essential in addressing human trafficking. INTERPOL serves as a nerve centre for international police cooperation, facilitating collaboration, information sharing, and operational support among its 196 member countries.¹³⁹ INTERPOL utilises its secure communication system, I-24/7, which connects law enforcement agencies from 196 member countries.¹⁴⁰ This platform allows for the rapid sharing of alerts, intelligence, and data related to human trafficking cases.¹⁴¹ INTERPOL coordinates international operations that bring together officers from various countries to tackle human trafficking.¹⁴² These operations often focus on specific trends or methods used by traffickers, allowing for the exchange of intelligence and best practices among participating nations. Interpol significantly enhances international cooperation in the fight against human trafficking, enabling member countries to share vital information and coordinate effective responses to this complex crime.

INTERPOL in one of its roles in combating human trafficking issues various types of notices, each designated by a specific colour that indicates its purpose. Notices are red, blue, green and yellow notice. Notices are international requests for cooperation or alerts allowing police in member countries to share critical crime-related information.¹⁴³ Notices are issued by the General Secretariat at the

¹³⁹INTERPOL, 'Interpol, its need, Role and Functions' <<https://thelegalquotient.com/criminal-laws/forensic-science/interpol-its-need-role-and-functions/3445/>>accessed 22 January 2025.

¹⁴⁰INTERPOL, 'Role of INTERPOL in Countering Migrant Struggling' <<https://rm.coe.int/session-v-zerihun-hailu-interpol-roles-in-countering-som-coe/1680b1bcef>>access 22 January 2025.

¹⁴¹*Ibid.*

¹⁴²INTERPOL, 'Inside Interpol's Probe into Cyber Enabled Human Trafficking' <<https://www.interpol.int/en/News-and-Events/News/2024/Inside-INTERPOL-s-probe-into-cyber-enabled-human-trafficking>>accessed 22 January, 2025.

¹⁴³INTERPOL, 'About Notices' <<https://www.interpol.int/en/How-we-work/Notices/About-Notices>>accessed 22nd January 2025.

request of a member country's INTERPOL National Central Bureau and are made available for all our member countries to consult in our Notices database.¹⁴⁴ Notices can also be issued at the request of International Criminal Tribunals and the International Criminal Court to seek persons wanted for committing crimes within their jurisdiction, notably genocide, war crimes, and human trafficking.¹⁴⁵

The red notice is used to seek the location and arrest of individuals wanted for prosecution or to serve a sentence.¹⁴⁶ It acts as a request for cooperation among member states to apprehend suspects pending extradition.¹⁴⁷ The blue notice is issued to collect additional information about a person's identity or activities in relation to a criminal investigation.¹⁴⁸ This assists law enforcement gather intelligence on individuals of interest.¹⁴⁹ The green notice is used to warn about a person's criminal activities if they are considered a potential threat to public safety.¹⁵⁰ This notice helps inform police about individuals who may pose risks.¹⁵¹ The yellow notice is for the purpose of locating missing persons, often minors, or identifying individuals who cannot identify themselves.¹⁵² This is particularly important in cases of abductions or disappearances.¹⁵³

INTERPOL assists in criminal investigations by dismantling the criminal networks behind human trafficking and migrant smuggling through investigative

¹⁴⁴*Ibid.*

¹⁴⁵*Ibid.*

¹⁴⁶*Ibid.*

¹⁴⁷*Ibid.*

¹⁴⁸NG Miralis, 'What is Interpol?' < <https://ngm.com.au/interpol-notices/interpol-an-overview/>> accessed 22 January, 2025.

¹⁴⁹*Ibid.*

¹⁵⁰INTERPOL (n 143).

¹⁵¹*Ibid.*

¹⁵²INTERPOL (n 143).

¹⁵³*Ibid.*

support and global operations.¹⁵⁴ Operations are ante ceded by training workshops to ensure that officers have expertise to detect cases of human trafficking¹⁵⁵. Operations often have a regional focus such as Turquesa across the Americas, WEKA in Africa, Storm Makers in Asia or cover multiple continents such as Liberterra.¹⁵⁶ Between them, these operations identify hundreds of criminals and detect thousands of victims every year.¹⁵⁷

With respect to the role of INTERPOL in Nigeria in combating human trafficking. INTERPOL collaborates with Nigeria's National Central Bureau (NCB) and other law enforcement agencies to conduct joint operations focusing on human trafficking networks.¹⁵⁸ NCB helps police officers across Nigeria uncover and inquire the flow of illicit goods along trafficking routes in and around the country.¹⁵⁹ Cases of human trafficking involving INTERPOL in Nigeria have been notably exposed through coordinated multi-agency operations. In a significant operation conducted between September 23-27, 2024, involving 12 Nigerian law enforcement agencies with support from INTERPOL and AFRIPOL, 36 suspects were arrested for various crimes including human trafficking.¹⁶⁰ This operation identified 12 victims who had been lured abroad with false promises of work but were instead subjected to sexual exploitation or

¹⁵⁴INTERPOL, 'Operational and Investigative Support to counter Human trafficking and Migrant Struggling' <<https://www.interpol.int/en/Crimes/Human-trafficking-and-migrant-smuggling/Our-response>>accessed 24 January 2025.

¹⁵⁵*Ibid*

¹⁵⁶*Ibid*.

¹⁵⁷*Ibid*.

¹⁵⁸National Action Plan, 'National Action Plan on Human Trafficking in Nigeria 2022-2026' <https://www.unodc.org/conig/uploads/documents/National_Action_Plan_on_Human_Trafficking_in_Nigeria.pdf>accessed 24 January ,2025.

¹⁵⁹INTERPOL Nigeria, 'How INTERPOL Support Nigeria to Tackle Internal Crime' <<https://www.interpol.int/en/Who-we-are/Member-countries/Africa/NIGERIA>>accessed 24 January 2025.

¹⁶⁰INTERPOL, Nigeria Agencies Unite to Combat organised Crime with support from Interpol and Afripol <<https://www.interpol.int/en/News-and-Events/News/2025/Nigerian-agencies-unite-to-combat-organized-crime-with-support-from-INTERPOL-and-AFRIPOL>>accessed 9 May, 2025.

forced labor.¹⁶¹ A female recruiter who had disguised herself as a victim to avoid detection was also arrested, and \$16,000 was seized from her account.¹⁶²

The Nigeria Police Force achieved a major milestone in its fight against transnational organised crime with the arrest of two internationally wanted fugitives: Felix Omoregie alias “Eghosa Johnson Omoregie,” a suspected ringleader of a human trafficking syndicate.¹⁶³ The alleged mastermind of a large-scale human trafficking operation, had been declared wanted by the Belgian authorities through an INTERPOL Red Notice issued on December 19, 2023, and was arrested in Benin City, Edo State, following diligent intelligence and enforcement efforts by police operatives.¹⁶⁴

INTERPOL carries out cross-border operation targeting human trafficking networks, such as Operation FLASH-WEKA, which involved law enforcement from 54 countries and resulted in over 1,000 arrests globally.¹⁶⁵ These operations are designed to dismantle organised crime networks by providing investigative support, training, and resources to local police forces. In Nigeria, these efforts assist to recognise victims and arrest traffickers operating within and beyond its borders.¹⁶⁶ The International Criminal Police Organisation says it arrested no

¹⁶¹*Ibid.*

¹⁶²*Ibid.*

¹⁶³Segun Adewole, Police Arrest Two High Profile Fugitives Wanted for Human Trafficking, Armed Robbery Guardian Newspaper (7 May, 2025) <<https://guardian.ng/news/nigeria/metro/police-arrest-two-high-profile-fugitives-wanted-for-human-trafficking-armed-robbery/>> accessed 9 May, 2025.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid*

¹⁶⁵INTERPOL, 'Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling: More than 1000 Arrests in Joint Interpol and AFRIPOL Operation' <<https://www.interpol.int/en/News-and-Events/News/2023/Human-trafficking-and-migrant-smuggling-more-than-1-000-arrests-in-joint-INTERPOL-AFRIPOL-operation>> accessed 25 January 2024) <<https://punchng.com/interpol-arrests-36-in-nigeria-criminal-raid-recovers-3m/>> accessed 9 May, 2025.

¹⁶⁶INTERPOL, 'Our Response' <<https://www.interpol.int/en/Crimes/Human-trafficking-and-migrant-smuggling/Our-response>> accessed 25 January, 2025.

fewer than 36 suspects for offences bordering on fraud and human trafficking in a coordinated operation with security agencies in Nigeria.¹⁶⁷

Interpol collaborates closely with various Nigerian agencies, including the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP), to implement national strategies against human trafficking. This multi-agency approach ensures a comprehensive response to trafficking issues, aligning with Nigeria's National Action Plan on Human Trafficking.¹⁶⁸

Interpol conducts ongoing research into human trafficking trends and threats, producing analytical reports that inform law enforcement strategies. This research-driven approach helps in understanding the evolving nature of trafficking networks and devising targeted interventions.¹⁶⁹ Through these roles, Interpol notably contributes to Nigeria's efforts to combat human trafficking, enhancing both the security of the state and the protection of vulnerable populations.

1.10 Conclusion

INTERPOL plays a fundamental role in the global fight against human trafficking, particularly in regions like Nigeria where the challenge is significant. Interpol has identified that traffickers increasingly use sophisticated technological methods, including online scams and fraud, to exploit victims. Traffickers also disguised as victims to avoid being detected. Through coordinated international operations, such as Operation Turquesa, Flash-WEKA and various regional initiatives, Interpol facilitates the deconstructing of human trafficking networks and enhances law enforcement capabilities across member countries. The organisation's commitment to intelligence sharing and operational support

¹⁶⁷Johnson Idowu, 'Interpol Arrests 36 in Criminal Raid, Recovers \$3million' *Punch Newspaper* (Lagos, 11 February, 2025).

¹⁶⁸ National Action Plan (n 158).

¹⁶⁹INTERPOL (n 166).

empowers local authorities to effectively combat trafficking and protect marginalised groups. By providing training workshops and access to critical databases. INTERPOL equips law enforcement with the necessary tools to identify and rescue victims while apprehending traffickers. Moreover, the collaborative efforts between INTERPOL and national agencies underscore the importance of a unified approach in addressing transnational crimes. As human trafficking continues to evolve, Interpol's adaptive strategies and ongoing research into emerging trends remain essential for developing effective counter measures. Conclusively, the work of INTERPOL not only contributes to immediate law enforcement successes but also promotes long-term resilience against human trafficking in Nigeria and beyond. This paper recommends that INTERPOL should develop and deploy advanced technological tools, including AI and enhanced data analytics, to better detect and disrupt traffickers' use of online platforms and sophisticated communication methods. It should also intensify efforts to counter technology-facilitated trafficking, such as online recruitment, scams, and abuse, by collaborating with tech companies and improving digital forensics capabilities. Facilitate better information exchange through secure communication systems (e.g., i24/7) and promote wider use of INTERPOL's notices and diffusions to track suspects and missing persons