

Supplementary report to the third, fourth and fifth (periodic) report of Islamic Republic of Mauritania
on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, focusing on:

“Sexual Exploitation of Children in Mauritania”

Submitted by

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ECPAT International is a global network of civil society organisations working for the eradication of all forms of sexual exploitation of children. For the past 28 years, ECPAT has acted as the international watchdog, monitoring States' response to sexual exploitation of children, and advocating for robust international measures to protect children from sexual exploitation. ECPAT International currently has 104 network members operating in 93 countries.

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Context of this Report

1. This report is meant to supplement the information provided by the Islamic Republic of Mauritania (hereafter GoM) in its combined third, fourth and fifth reports on the Convention on the Rights of the Child submitted in June 2016.¹ This report contains recommendations to end child sexual exploitation² (hereafter SEC) in Mauritania.
2. This submission is based on research by ECPAT International.
3. The scope of the submission is limited to SEC and its different manifestations, including exploitation of children in prostitution,³ online child sexual exploitation (OCSE), child sexual abuse materials (CSAM),⁴ trafficking of children for sexual purposes, sexual exploitation of children in the context of travel and tourism (SECTT),⁵ and child early and forced marriage (CEFM).

Status and developments of sexual exploitation of children in Mauritania

4. Mauritania has an estimated population of 4.1 million inhabitants,⁶ 1.9 million being children under 18 years old.⁷ Despite a steady economic growth and a per capita income of \$1,270 per year,⁸ 66% of the population lives in multidimensional poverty as understood by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP).⁹ In 2016, Mauritania was at the bottom of the UNDP Human Development Index, ranking 157 out of 188 countries.¹⁰
5. Only 59% of children are registered at birth. Mauritania is 20th in UNICEF's ranking list of countries with the highest under-five mortality rate, with 85 deaths per 1,000 births. Unregistered children at birth are more vulnerable to trafficking, sexual exploitation, early and forced marriage and child labour. 34% of children under 18-year-old are married in Mauritania and, in 2015, 15% of children were exploited in child labour.¹¹
6. It can be said that all manifestations of SEC are widespread in Mauritania. The main root causes are poverty, unemployment, unstable families, the HIV/AIDS, parental disengagement, and lack of access to education and to basic social services. In addition, a significant number of children are not registered in the civil registry and do not have identity documents, which prevents them from enrolling in school which makes them more vulnerable to sexual exploitation. and trafficking.¹² Finally, Mauritania has a plural legal system partly based on French civil law besides customary law and Sharia (Islamic law).¹³ This hybrid system has led, among other things, to the adoption of reservations regarding certain provisions of the CRC that might be perceived as against the beliefs and values of Islam.¹⁴
7. Mauritania is a country of origin, transit and destination for child victims of forced labour and **trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation**.¹⁵
8. Internally, trafficking is manifested through the widespread practice of slavery. Although abhorred and criminalised since 2007, the practice of slavery persists in Mauritania. The number of slaves

in the country is estimated at 150,000 to 300,000, the highest rate of slaves in the world.¹⁶ The slave belongs to his master, who can sell 'it', give 'it', exchange 'it', rent 'it', lend 'it'; 'it' has a market value, just like an object.¹⁷ Slavery is closely linked to trafficking in human beings, as well as sexual exploitation.

9. At the international level, Mauritania is first and foremost a destination country for trafficking. Women and girls from Gambia, Mali, Senegal and other West African countries are forced into domestic servitude and are vulnerable to sex trafficking in Mauritania.¹⁸ Moreover, the war in Mali has caused thousands of Malians to flee to neighbouring countries, including Mauritania. These refugees are hosted in camps on the borders with Mali. In this regard, the Mbera camp hosts more than 40,000 Malian refugees.¹⁹ Young girls in the camp are vulnerable and can easily become victims of "dishonest networks".²⁰ Many underage girls, sometimes even under the age of 12, also face forced marriage in the camps.²¹ The marriage of these girls is often followed by their integration into prostitution networks.²²
10. Mauritania is also a source country for the trafficking of children for the purpose of sexual exploitation. Particularly, young Mauritanian girls are subjected to sex trafficking abroad. The most common route for trafficking of these young girls is towards the Gulf countries or North Africa.²³
11. Cases of **exploitation in prostitution of children**, even between the ages of 12 and 14, in public nightlife, such as nightclubs and bars, have been reported.²⁴ However, most cases concern children in domesticity. Mauritanian legislation prohibits child labour, but the phenomenon of "*little maids*" still exists because of the old traditions rooted amongst population, mainly affecting girls. For example, many girls are sent away by their families to private homes to work as domestic servants to support family needs.²⁵ According to a survey conducted by *Terre des Hommes* (TdH) and the *Association des Femmes Chefs de Familles* (AFCF), about 60% of these girls are under 12 years old.²⁶ The majority of underage domestic girls come from remote rural areas. Others come from the outskirt areas of Nouakchott.²⁷ They are usually from poor families, separated households, parents who are unable to work or they are orphans.²⁸ Their employers can take advantage of their vulnerable situation and of their economic dependence to obtain sexual favours for remuneration.²⁹ NGOs are unable to gather comprehensive data on the subject, but, in 2016, some NGOs identified 6,353 cases of child abuse, including sexual abuse.³⁰
12. With regard to **OCSE**, no recent data is available or exists on the scale or scope of this problem, although Mauritania has a fairly solid legal arsenal in this area.³¹ According to UNICEF, 94% of the population has a mobile phone and 11% of the population is connected to Internet. Even though the percentage of people connected to the Internet seems low, the increase in Internet access allows increasingly easier and faster access to pornography on smartphones, or in video clubs and Internet cafes.³²

13. It is difficult to find recent data on **sexual exploitation in the context of travel and tourism** in Mauritania. Mauritania is not a favoured destination for sex tourism, which affects more neighbouring countries.³³ However the issue is most probably prevalent around transport hubs with many regional and national travellers.
14. About 34% of girls in Mauritania are **married** before the age of 18 and about 14% before the age of 15.³⁴ Several factors explain this situation. Poverty can drive some families, unable to support their children, to marry them out.³⁵ The desire to protect girls against pregnancies out of wedlock is a driving factor of child marriages in this 90% Muslim country.³⁶ The increase in rape cases also encourages families to marry their daughter as soon as possible to preserve their honour.³⁷
15. At the end of 2015, the GoM adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This framework commits the GoM to eliminate all forms of violence against children, including sexual abuse and exploitation.³⁸ It is therefore timely and appropriate for Mauritania to strengthen its efforts to end SEC.

General measures of implementation

National Action Plan

16. The National Directorate of Childhood has drawn up a **National Strategy for the Protection of Children (SNPE)** in Mauritania, complemented by a **2009-2013 Action Plan**. The SNPE aims at protecting children against violence, exploitation, abuse and neglect. It includes children exploited at work or victims of trafficking, children living on the streets, children who are victims of harmful cultural practices (including child marriage), as well as children who are victims of violence and sexual exploitation.³⁹
17. The Government has developed several plans of action to eliminate child labour, especially its worst forms (including sexual exploitation). For example, the **2015-2020 Action Plan for the Elimination of Child Labour** is being implemented to eliminate the worst forms of child labour by strengthening child labour laws, training government officials, advocacy campaigns and mobilizing funds for social programmes to remove children from these work conditions.⁴⁰
18. With regard to child trafficking and slavery, in 2015, the government drafted a **National Action Plan Against Trafficking in Persons, including Women and Children**. However, at the end of 2016 this project had not been finalised yet.⁴¹ It is part of the 2015-2017 strategic action plan of the Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights and Humanitarian Action.⁴² In addition, the National Agency for Combating Sequels of Slavery, Insertion and Poverty Alleviation, also known as the Tadamoun Agency, coordinates any state policy in the field of social protection.⁴³
19. In 2016, the **Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture of Mauritania and UNICEF** signed a **Memorandum of Cooperation**, aimed at promoting the role of the private sector and in particular the participation of economic actors in supporting the rights of the child.

Coordination

20. At the governmental level, the **Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of National Education and the Ministry of Youth** each have a unit responsible for the issue of violence against children, which includes sexual exploitation.⁴⁴
21. The **National Council for Childhood** is an advisory body that aims at coordinating and monitoring the government's efforts in the area of child protection and child development. It is chaired by the Prime Minister's Office and consists of civil servants from the Ministry of Social Affairs, Childhood and Family (MASE) and from the Ministries of Education, Health and Justice. NGOs and international organisations are also involved. The MASEF ensures the development of policies and programmes regarding social action and child protection, as well as the coordination of all public and private interventions in this area.⁴⁵
22. The **Group on Child Trafficking, Smuggling and Labour** is responsible to coordinate efforts to combat child labour and trafficking. It is composed of the MASEF's Childhood Directorate, the Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights and Humanitarian Action, the Directorate on Child Judicial Protection and various NGOs.
23. A **Brigade for Minors** (*Brigade des mineurs*) was created on April 6, 2006, within the **Directorate-General of National Security** which is under the responsibility of the Ministry of International Affairs or and Decentralisation. It is competent to investigate criminal acts relating to underage victims.⁴⁶ A **Directorate for the Judicial Protection of Children** (DPJE) within the Ministry of Justice was set up and gradually consolidated.⁴⁷
24. There is also *l'Association des Maires Defenseurs de l'Enfant* (an **Association of Child Defenders Mayors**), which includes almost all mayors, as well as two parliamentary groups on childhood.⁴⁸
25. Coordination between these different structures is based on meetings and seminars devoted to the issue of violence against children as well as periodic data exchanges.⁴⁹
26. At the level of the judicial system, the Government has established, in accordance with the 2015 Anti-Slavery Act, **three regional courts** with exclusive jurisdiction on cases of trafficking in persons and slavery.⁵⁰ However, none of these courts have the staff, funding and resources necessary to investigate and prosecute offenses.⁵¹

Training and awareness raising

27. The Government, in partnership with international organisations, organised several workshops on trafficking. Magistrates and court clerks were trained on the definition of trafficking and the national and international instruments in place to combat the phenomenon.⁵² The public authorities regularly promote, through the press or other media supports, the various instruments and conventions on children rights to which Mauritania is a party, translated into the different local languages.⁵³ A simplified guide on CRC was developed and disseminated through the medias.

Various campaigns of prevention, information or promotion of the CRC were organised in collaboration with NGOs or international organisations, in particular during the annual Children's Days.⁵⁴

Civil Society

28. The Government collaborates with NGOs in charge of child protection, notably through a **cyber-forum** set up in 2005 which provides a platform for dialogue.⁵⁵
29. Concerning slavery, however, the Mauritanian government does not cooperate with civil society. It actively stifles the voices of anti-slavery supporters and human rights defenders. Affected organisations include *SOS-Esclaves* (SOS-Slavery) and the *Initiative de Resurgence du Mouvement Abolitionniste* (Resurrection Initiative of the Abolitionist Movement (IRA)). Some activists, including the president of the IRA, were arrested in 2014 and sentenced in 2015 to two years of imprisonment on the occasion of the organisation of an anti-slavery convoy in the country.⁵⁶

Prevention of the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography art. 9 (para. 1 and 2) OPSC)

30. So far, the actions of the Government of Mauritania in raising awareness and education in the area of protection of children rights are limited.
31. Various prevention, information and CRC promotion campaigns have been organised in collaboration with NGOs or international organisations, in particular during the annual Children's Days.⁵⁷ A number focus more specifically on child marriage. However, the effectiveness of the work conducted by NGOs suffers from a lack of significant resources and from social resistance, which is still prevailing. Local NGOs, as well as grassroots organisations (e.g. women's groups and cooperatives) play a leading role in public education through community awareness campaigns, but also through the implementation of projects at the national or local level. The Mauritanian Association for Human Rights (AMDH), *l'Association Mauritienne pour la Sante de la Mere et de l'Enfant* (Mauritanian Association for the Health of the Mother and the Child (AMSME)), *l'Association Mauritienne des Femmes Chefs de Familles* (Mauritanian Association of Women Heads of Families (AFCF)) are examples of particularly active associations in the fight against early marriages or young girls domesticity.⁵⁸
32. Studies were conducted several years ago by NGOs, including the NGO ANAIF-PIE on sexual exploitation, protection, trafficking, sale, child pornography, sexual exploitation in the context of tourism and travel and Internet.⁵⁹
33. In its 2016 report on the implementation of the CRC, the GoM highlighted the measures taken to ensure the participation of Mauritanian children in the fight against violence, including against sexual exploitation.⁶⁰

34. A Parliamentary Group for the Protection of Children was established in 1999 as part of a raising awareness on the children's cause.⁶¹ Following this, a Children's Parliament was created in 2007, composed equally of girls and boys aged between 11 and 16 from primary and secondary schools.⁶² A second Children's Parliament was set up in 2011. The parliament is regulated by a legal framework which allows children to address questions to ministers and discuss all issues that concern them.⁶³
35. A Municipal Children's Council (CME) was created in 2013 in the municipality of Zouerate, which includes all children's categories (school children, children with disabilities, street children and orphan children).⁶⁴ It is composed of 21 children including 11 girls.⁶⁵ This Council reinforces the National Childhood Movement, an alliance network consisting of the Children's Parliament, le *Réseau des Maires défenseurs des Droits de l'Enfant* (the Network of Child Rights Defenders Mayors), the Network of Imams, the Network of Journalists and the Parliamentary Group for the Protection of Children. This alliance network provides a forum for children to express their views and make their voices heard to decision-makers to defend their rights, in accordance with CRC Article 12.⁶⁶
36. Programmes have been initiated in schools to take into account the views and suggestions of children, in the fight against the violence they experience. Some NGOs involved them in their outreach strategy to disseminate the CRC. The children participated in raising awareness campaigns against violence such as sexual exploitation through messages and information broadcasted via the newspapers, television, theatre, radio, and posters.⁶⁷

Prohibition on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (arts. 3, 4 (2) and (3) and 5-7 OPSC)

Existing criminal or penal laws and regulations

37. In 2003, Mauritania passed Act No. 025/2003 on the suppression of **trafficking in persons**. Trafficking is defined in Article 1 as "*the enlistment, transportation, forcible transfer or use of force or by means of the threat or other forms of coercion, of abduction, 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*".⁶⁸ The law condemns nearly all forms of trafficking by adding that "*exploitation includes at least unpaid work, forced labour or services and similar practices, the removal of organs for profit, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation*".⁶⁹ This definition is similar to and in line with the Palermo Protocol.
38. The sexual exploitation of children in **prostitution** is expressly condemned by Articles 57 to 59 of the Executive Order No. 2005-015 on the criminal protection of the child. The most relevant provisions concern procuring. Article 57 provides a broad definition of procuring, in accordance with Article 3(1)(b) of the Optional Protocol to the CRC. According to article 58, "*the procuring*

*of a child is punishable by one to five years of imprisonment and of a fine from 400,000 to 4,000,000 ouguiya (about 1,100 to 11,000 USD)."*⁷⁰

39. The Executive Order on the criminal protection of the child condemns "*the exhibition or exploitation for commercial and tourist purposes of pornographic photographs, images or sounds, films representing a child or several children*". The dissemination, importation and exportation, offer, distribution, production of "child pornography" for the purpose of its dissemination through a computer system, the acquisition and possession of "child pornography" are also criminalised. These provisions are relatively exhaustive. However, none clearly defines what child pornography entails. Each of these crimes are sentenced from two months to one year of imprisonment and of a fine from 160,000 to 300,000 ouguiyas (about 440 to 825 USD).⁷¹
40. In addition, the authorities adopted Act N° 007/2016 of 20 July 2016. This text sets up an effective system to fight against cybercrime and introduces important innovations through the creation of specific ICT offenses.⁷² Among the prohibited crimes are the recording, distribution, offering and making available pornography representing children through a computer system. These acts are punishable by a sentence ranging from three to seven years of imprisonment and/or of a fine from 500,000 to 4,000,000 ouguiyas (about 1,400 to 11,235 USD).⁷³
41. There is no provision in the Mauritanian law criminalizing **sexual exploitation in the context of travel and tourism**.
42. The 2001 Personal Status Code sets the legal age of **marriage** at 18 years old. However, "*the incapable person may be married by his guardian "weli" if he sees an obvious interest in the marriage*".⁷⁴ The use of the qualifier "*incapable*" may be subject to all interpretations and, by extension, applies to minors.⁷⁵ The marriage of a girl (female child) is in addition indirectly mentioned in the articles of the Personal Status Code relating to nullification⁷⁶ and divorce.⁷⁷
43. Article 5 refers to the constituent elements of marriage, including the consent of the spouses.⁷⁸ However Article 9 states that "*the silence of the girl is consent*". The girl has no say in her own marriage, which is negotiated by the parents. No act in Mauritania penalises early and forced child marriage.⁷⁹
44. In Mauritania, the Code of Obligations and Contracts is the legal framework applicable regarding reparations and it provides for damages for any victim of crime, including children who are victims of sexual exploitation.⁸⁰ However, no text explicitly refers to child victims.

Impunity

45. As far as slavery is concerned, some reports have indicated that prosecutors and judges often prosecute alleged slave owners for less serious offenses in order to avoid a slavery trial. Since the adoption of the 2015 Anti-Slavery Act, anti-slavery courts have received 47 cases, involving at least 53 suspects, but only prosecuted and sentenced two slave owners in 2016. These were the

first convictions under the 2015 Act and the first convictions for trafficking since 2011.⁸¹ The slave owners, who had enslaved two women from an early age, were sentenced to a conditional prison sentence,⁸² which minimises the deterrent effects of the repressive measures enshrined in anti-slavery and anti-trafficking laws.⁸³

Liability of legal persons

46. It appears that there is no legislation in Mauritania establishing the liability of legal persons who commit offenses under the Additional protocol.

Extraterritorial jurisdiction and extradition

47. The Criminal Procedure Code contains provisions on extraterritorial jurisdiction. The Mauritanian courts are competent to judge offenses committed by its nationals outside the national territory, according to the principle of active personality set out in Article 596 of the 1983 Criminal Procedure Code.⁸⁴
48. The 2005 Act on the criminal protection of the child adds that "*the Mauritanian courts for children are competent to hear all actions against Mauritians and individuals habitually resident in the country who are the perpetrators of offenses against children. even when the facts are committed outside the country*".⁸⁵
49. However, Mauritanian law does not apply the principle of extraterritoriality when only the victim is of Mauritanian nationality (passive personality principle) and is therefore less protective for the child victim of sexual exploitation abroad.⁸⁶

Protection of the rights of child victims (arts. 8 and 9 (3) and (4) OPSC)

Measures adopted to protect the rights and interests of child victims of acts prohibited by the Additional Protocol

50. Training sessions has been offered to judges to learn how to enforce the Executive Order on the criminal protection of the child, but few have followed these sessions and most still rely on the Criminal Code, even though the Criminal Code provides less protection. In addition, the Order contains certain definitions which are ambiguous, and thus left open to the judicial interpretation. Convictions may therefore depend on the judge's personal point of view. Moreover, in Mauritania, a man can become a judge just by proving he has an informal Koranic training and, although women have official access to the judiciary, only one of them has acceded to it, for the first time, in 2014.⁸⁷ These appointment requirements may have an impact on the application of the Sharia law and on the judgments handed down. In 2009, the Committee on the Rights of the Child expressed concern that girls who are victims of violence or sexual exploitation are often held criminally responsible by the Sharia law (notably of the crime of "zina").⁸⁸

51. Despite the creation of several minor brigades under the 2015 Act,⁸⁹ many reports point to the ongoing inability of the police, prosecutors and the judiciary to respond appropriately to reported exploitation cases, in the identification of victims, investigation of cases and in the prosecution and conviction of the perpetrators of these crimes.⁹⁰
52. Little information is available on the judicial remedies and complaint mechanisms open to child victims of sexual exploitation in Mauritania. However, the 2015 Act is a positive step forward in this area, as it allows non-governmental organisations legally registered for at least five years to represent child victims in court. However, the legal registration requirement limits the application of this provision by prohibiting influential anti-slavery groups such as the IRA from representing these victims.⁹¹
53. The 2015 Anti-Slavery Act provides a comprehensive legal assistance to victims of slavery and requires public officials to provide them with information about their rights and exempt them from the legal fees.⁹² However, such a provision should be generalised and incorporated into other legislation so as not to be limited to cases of slavery and include all victims of SEC. In particular, in the area of child marriage, there are no effective judicial remedies for young girls who are victims of different forms of exploitation. The legal proceedings initiated by these victims only rarely succeed, as they often withdraw their complaints by fear of reprisals.⁹³
54. Training courses were organised with the assistance of Terre des Hommes - Mauritania for the benefit of juvenile justice actors on the legal assistance of minors.⁹⁴ The Institute for Training in Social Action (IFAS) trains social workers in the social protection of children and the **National Forum for the Promotion of Women's and Children's Rights** provides legal and judicial assistance for victims of sexual violence and street children.
55. Regarding the civil society participation, AMSME has set up a toll-free number available to victims. In 2015, it recorded 256 calls for information.⁹⁵
56. In addition, some NGOs provide direct legal assistance to children. Among them, *Association Mauritienne pour la Sante de la Mere et de l'Enfant* (the Mauritanian Association for the Health of the Mother and the Child (AMSME)) provides judicial and legal assistance (legal advice, follow-up of cases in court and defence of victims).⁹⁶ *L'Antenne des mineurs* (Juvenile Antenna) is an association of lawyers at the Nouakchott Bar defending children.⁹⁷ Finally, *l'Association Mauritienne des Femmes Juristes pour la Protection de la Jeune Fille* (the Mauritanian Association of Women Lawyers for the Protection of Young Women) aims at opening a permanent and/or a mobile counselling centre for girls and women who cannot afford using a lawyer.⁹⁸

Recovery and reintegration of victims

57. Various national institutions and programmes have been set up by the Mauritanian government, such as the *Centre de Protection et d'Integration Sociale des Enfants* (**Centre for the Social Protection and Integration of Children**), which has been in operation since November 2007. It

is a government program to provide shelter, food, education and vocational training to vulnerable children. In 2015, 373 children were taken care of and another 1,100 closely monitored.⁹⁹

58. In 2014, the **European Union, in partnership with UNICEF**, granted a 1,5 million euro grant to Mauritania for the protection of Mauritanian children against violence, exploitation, discrimination, abuse and neglect.¹⁰⁰ This program was implemented in several provinces between 2014 and 2016 in collaboration with civil society and in coordination with the government partners. In 2015, it provided reintegration services to more than 12,374 children.¹⁰¹
59. In its recommendations in 2009, the Committee on the Rights of the Child recommended to the Government of Mauritania to give priority to the recovery and reintegration of children, including those who are victims of trafficking. It also recommended to ensure that they receive an adequate education and training, and that they receive assistance and psychological counselling, taking into account the difference between the sexes.¹⁰² In Mauritania, however, there is no legislation that clearly regulates the social work to be carried out during the recovery and reintegration process of child victims of exploitation and abuse or in situations of vulnerability. No legislation regulates either the practice of the profession of social worker in terms of standards and regulations to be observed.¹⁰³
60. Civil society plays a key role in assisting the recovery and reintegration of child victims of sexual exploitation. Drop-in centres and shelters were created and social recovery and reintegration services were developed by NGOs, coordinating between them.
61. AMSME, for example, has opened a **psychosocial care centre for victims of sexual violence**.¹⁰⁴ Nursing centres for child victims have been opened by *l'Association de Lutte contre la Dependance* (Association for the Fight against Addiction) and *l'Association des Femmes Chefs de Familles* (the Association of Women Heads of Families). The latter initiated, in collaboration with Terre des Hommes in Mauritania, the project "Protection and reintegration of girls in domesticity victim of violence and abuse". This action is part of the work of Terre des Hommes in Mauritania to strengthen the skillset of the different associations involved in the care and reintegration of people coming from the vulnerable segments of society, including underage girls in domesticity.¹⁰⁵ Training is provided to young girls to enable them to leave the domestic service.
62. The **Centre for the Social Protection and Integration of Children** (CPISE), mentioned above, also provides to children in situations of exploitation services to facilitate their reintegration.

International cooperation (art. 10 OPSC)

63. In order to combat cross-border crime and in particular trafficking in human beings for the purpose of sexual exploitation, the Mauritanian government has signed many bilateral agreements with neighbouring countries such as Mali and Senegal.¹⁰⁶

64. In 2015, the International Organization for Migration in Mali implemented a regional project called "Coordinated Border Management in Niger, Mali, Mauritania and Burkina Faso" (2015-2016). The project aimed at strengthening security and regional stability in the Sahel and at promoting a regional approach to immigration and border management. This project runs in parallel with a second IOM project, "Strengthening Joint Border Management between Mali and Mauritania", launched in 2016.¹⁰⁷

Recommendations to the GoM

General measures

1. Review the reservation made by the Government of Mauritania to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, in order to safeguard its integrity;
2. Ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure;
3. Submit the voluntary review on the SDGs indicating, in particular, specific data and progress regarding targets 5.2, 5.3, 8.7, 16.2 and 16.3;
4. Write and submit the initial report on the implementation of the OPSC for the Committee on the Rights of the Child;
5. Finalise and adopt the National Action Plan against Trafficking in Persons;
6. Include an appropriate monitoring and evaluation of the plan(s) developed by the Government;
7. Strengthen the coordination and collaboration among the different government departments, agencies and NGOs working in the areas covered by the OPSC;
8. Translate local plans and strategies into local languages and systematically disseminate the OPSC to state agents as well as to all relevant professionals, in particular border police officers, judges and prosecutors;
9. Mobilise sufficient resources to provide systematic and targeted training on the provisions of the OPSC to state agents and all relevant professionals, in particular border police officers, judges and prosecutors;
10. Ensure that the Group on Trafficking, Smuggling and Child Labour and the National Council for Childhood are active and receive sufficient funding to fulfil their missions;
11. Increase human and financial resources of *the Brigade des mineurs* (minor brigade), including resources for monitoring and evaluation;
12. Conduct in-depth research on specific trends in the country that have not yet been widely addressed, such as child prostitution in public places, SECTT and online sexual exploitation of children, in order to better identify the magnitude of the problem and develop appropriate programs;
13. Strengthen data collection and management systems for the sexual exploitation of children.

Prevention

14. Raise public awareness on all offences covered by the OPSC and on the penalties for these crimes, and coordinate, support, monitor and evaluate outreach activities;
15. Invest in prevention programmes that value children to address the root causes and multiple vulnerabilities that endanger children, families and communities. Programmes to evaluate awareness and prevention operations should be put in place, in particular by civil society, to monitor the situation of children's rights and the fight against SEC;
16. Establish a sex offender registry to ensure that offender activities are monitored/restricted and reduce their possibility of interaction with children. The modalities of a registry should be highly regulated, with a focus on who should be allowed access to, how long the offender should be registered and what crimes warrant registration;
17. Promote social norms of child protection through community development projects and the media, including social networks;
18. Engage the private sector, including Internet service providers, to block the content of SEC and its dissemination on the Internet;
19. Sign both the 2014 and the 2015 WePROTECT Statements of Action (of governments), [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/477612/171211 - Statement of Action - Countries LEAs - FINAL 4 .pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/477612/171211_-_Statement_of_Action_-_Countries_LEAs_-_FINAL_4_.pdf) and <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5630f48de4b00a75476ecf0a/t/582ba1b403596e2e332b225c/1479254513430/WeProtect+2015+-+Country+Statement+of+Action.pdf>.
20. Ensure that staff working with children (e.g. in schools) has police authorisations and knowledge of the codes of conduct and the consequences in case of breaches;
21. Ensure that the voice of the child is heard and taken into account in all legal and social proceedings affecting the child. as well as systematically involve children and young people in the participation and monitoring of the local implementation of policies and programs relating to the rights of the child;

Prohibition and related questions

22. Amend the anti-slavery law of 2015 to provide specific protection to child slaves who are victims of sexual exploitation;
23. Amend the 2005 Criminal Protection of Children Act to include a comprehensive definition of pornographic "messages", in accordance with Articles 2 and 3 of the OPSC;
24. Adopt a law sanctioning early marriage and amend the Personal Status Code accordingly;
25. Amend the provisions of the Personal Status Code relating to marriage to ensure incapables cannot be married without their consent, and remove from the Code that the silence of the girl is consent.;
26. Ensure that the State effectively fights against impunity and fully enforces existing laws, and impose severe penalties on those guilty of offenses covered by the OPSC;
27. Combat corruption to prevent impunity;
28. Conduct rigorous investigations into and prosecute officials and teachers who commit SEC offenses;

29. Provide the necessary human, technical and financial resources to implement and enforce the laws in force, including through the training of the justice sector actors.
30. Amend the provisions of the Code of Criminal Procedure relating to the extraterritorial jurisdiction of Mauritania to include the principle of passive personality in order to hear any action against a perpetrator of an offence committed against Mauritanian children, even when the facts occurred abroad.

Protection of the rights of child victims

31. Invest in the development of analytical tools and new investigative techniques adapted to the online environment, to enable police to identify perpetrators and rescue victims, collect digital evidence and conduct online covert law enforcement operations;
32. Amend the Anti-Slavery Law of 2015 to allow victims of slavery and similar practices, or all organisations fighting for human rights, acting on their behalf, without precondition on the date of their creation or registration, to bring a claim in front of the courts. Adopt similar measures for all other cases of sexual exploitation;
33. Provide for the provision of comprehensive legal assistance to all victims of sexual exploitation, in whatever form;
34. Ensure that reporting mechanisms are accessible to all children;
35. Ensure that police services have the resources and expertise to identify, investigate and respond and have at their disposal child-friendly methods when dealing with child victims and witnesses and that enforcement is not compromised by corruption or social tolerance towards SEC;
36. Ensure that victims of SEC are not treated as criminals; the burden of proof is on the authorities and not on the victim;
37. Provide explicitly for access to reparation for all child victims of sexual exploitation, not limited to slavery. Take steps to ensure that all child victims of sexual exploitation have access to adequate procedures to seek, without discrimination, compensation from those legally responsible.
38. Provide appropriate recovery and reintegration services accessible and affordable for victims of SEC;
39. Ensure that child-friendly services are available and regulated by quality standards, put in place by competent and well-trained staff with adequate resources and easily accessible to all children;
40. Develop emergency shelters for child victims which offer comprehensive services (psychological, legal, medical, etc.), pending the decision of the juvenile judge;
41. Strengthen the capacity of nursery staff dealing with child victims of SEC, including victim identification and intervention methods.

International assistance and cooperation

42. Strengthen existing international police and judicial cooperation through multilateral, regional and bilateral arrangements, in particular with neighbouring countries or countries of destination for trafficked persons coming from Mauritania, to improve prevention, investigation, prosecution and sanctions against trafficking and develop mechanisms to coordinate their implementation.
43. Improve the regular exchange of up-to-date information on child sexual abuse offenders traveling, between law enforcement agencies across the jurisdictions of countries of demand, supply and victimisation, through an increased use of the following tools:
 - INTERPOL's "Green Notice" for sex offenders found guilty of reoffending in other countries;
 - Deny entry on the territory to those guilty of sexual abuse of children who could re-offend;
 - The development of sex offender registries accessible to law enforcement only.

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