

Statement by

According to the public notice dated 06.07.2021 posted on <https://wcd.nic.in/acts/public-notice-and-draft-trafficking-persons-prevention-care-and-rehabilitation-bill-2021> comments and suggestions on the **Draft Trafficking in Persons (Prevention, Care and Rehabilitation) Bill, 2021** were to be submitted to the Ministry of Women and Child Development on **14.07.2021**. This gave rise to a reasonable belief among stakeholders that the Draft anti-Trafficking Bill will not be finalized until *after* comments and suggestions from the public have been received and reviewed by the Ministry. Thereafter, the Bill would be subject to procedures laid down in the Government of India (Transaction of Business) Rules, 1961 which include approval by the Union Cabinet.

To our utter shock, the **Lok Sabha Bulletin Part II** published on **12.07.2021**, lists the '**Trafficking in Persons (Prevention, Care and Rehabilitation) Bill, 2021**' in the 'Tentative List of Government Legislative and Financial Business expected to be taken up during the Sixth Session of Seventeenth Lok Sabha' for "**introduction, consideration and passing**". This gives the impression that the anti-Trafficking Bill has been finalized and cleared for introduction in Parliament, even *before* stakeholders have had the opportunity to make comments and suggestions on the same.

We also regret to note that while the Ministry has taken over two years to draft the Bill, affected groups and communities were given less than two weeks to share their views and feedback. This is contrary to the **Government of India, Ministry of Law and Justice, Legislative Department's communication D.O. No. 11 (35)/2013-L.1 dated 05.02.2014** which requires every draft legislation to be placed in the public domain for **a minimum period of thirty days**. The short notice given to stakeholders on a Bill as complex and far-reaching as the anti-Trafficking Bill, in violation of the Government's own pre-legislative consultative policy of 2014, once again shows that the Ministry is not serious about consulting stakeholders including those who are vitally affected by the proposed legislation.

In light of the above, we are pained to note that the public notice dated 06.07.2021 inviting comments and suggestions on the Draft anti-Trafficking Bill is nothing but eyewash and the Ministry has no real intention of considering, let alone accepting, any views and suggestions given by stakeholders on the Bill.

We hope that this is not the case and that the Ministry will allow stakeholders more time to examine the Bill. We have submitted a request to this effect on 11.07.2021 and await a response to the same.