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**PRESS RELEASE**  
**For immediate release**

## **FIRST NATION-WIDE TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATION COMPETITION TO COMBAT HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN CANADA**

**Montreal, Canada, April 1, 2021** – The United Nations Office on Drug and Crime, IBM, Fundación Pasos Libres and the Montreal-based International Centre for the Prevention of Crime (ICPC) are proud to launch the "DataJam Against Exploitation", a first of its kind innovation competition to identify and combat human trafficking in Canada. This competition will strive to shed light onto the exploitation of Canada's most vulnerable communities and work towards finding solutions to protect victims and to facilitate the identification and prosecution of this heinous crime. Between 2009 and 2018, there were just under 1,400 victims of human trafficking reported by police in Canada. Of these victims, women and girls comprised the vast majority (97%)<sup>1</sup>.

This competition, funded by the Government of Canada, is rooted in a partnership of complementary expertise with the objective of increasing public awareness of human trafficking and enhancing collaboration among interdisciplinary sectors in Canada.

"The Government of Canada is committed to working with all partners domestically and internationally against human trafficking. We were pleased to provide federal funding to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime for their innovative DataJam project. This collaborative and inspired initiative will bring participants together in a virtual capacity to explore possible technological solutions to help raise awareness of human trafficking in Canada. Through projects like this one, we are working together to build a safer and more resilient Canada, where all people are protected from human trafficking and its harms.", specifies the Honourable Bill Blair, Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness.

"Traffickers have integrated technology into their business model at every stage of the process, from recruiting to exploiting victims. Technology can be misused by traffickers to launder or transfer illicit profits. It can also have a positive use in helping to combat trafficking, such as by aiding investigations, enhancing prosecutions, raising awareness, and providing services to victims", said Martin Hemmi, Associate Criminal Justice Officer UNODC Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling Section "Tapping into the potential and talent of young people on a matter that affects them is absolutely essential. We need all the tools possible to fight this crime and need to ensure that the voices of young people are heard and taken into account".

In May 2020, the ICPC released its report "Victims of Sex Trafficking in the Americas: Overview of Public Strategies and Future Directions, 2000-2019" providing an overview of public strategies and establishing recommendations in light of two decades of research and findings. This report focuses on the inclusion of a new criterion in the national anti-trafficking strategy: empowerment. Whether for protection or investigation purposes, the victim must be at the centre of policy thinking in the search for concrete responses to human trafficking.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2020001/article/00006-eng.htm#n10>

“We must continue to do our best, over the next two decades, to learn together from our successes, but equally from our limitations, in order to engage together in a merciless fight against human trafficking. Partnerships like this create opportunities for young people from academic networks and technological institutions, to connect, collaborate, succeed and thrive together in the fight against this crime in Canada.”, said Ann Champoux, ICPC Director General.

DataJam participants, working in teams of 4 or 5, will use public data and training from national and international experts to design tech-based solutions that will contribute to solving specific human trafficking dynamics in Canada. IBM volunteers will help mentor and coach participants on the use of technology and assist in bringing the most promising ideas to life.

“Young people are not only an important risk group susceptible to scenarios that lead to exploitation, but a population that can lead impactful actions in the anti-trafficking field if they are provided with the necessary tools,” points out Sebastián Arévalo, CEO of Fundación Pasos Libres. “Educating young people within alternative learning scenarios such as the DataJam Against Exploitation emerges as an opportunity to form a generation of citizens with the knowledge, skills and power to disrupt human trafficking.”

“IBM employees have a tradition of sharing their expertise with the community, particularly students, on a range of humanitarian issues,” said Jennifer Roynon, IBM Canada Corporate Social Responsibility Lead. “That’s why they are eager to support the upcoming DataJam, and help find new ways to address human trafficking more effectively.”

The virtual event, held in French and English, will take place over an 11-day period, from May 7 to May 17, and is open to anyone residing in Canada over the age of 18. The call for submissions begins as of April 1 for students and/or professionals, with knowledge in the development of technological solutions, data analysis, design, marketing, business, human trafficking, human rights, crime prevention, justice and victim-care related areas, who are interested in proposing and developing innovative solutions that can be rapidly deployed to fight this crime.

For more information and to register for the DataJam Against Exploitation, please visit the following [website](#).

### **About the International Centre for the Prevention of Crime (ICPC)**

The International Centre for the Prevention of Crime (ICPC) is an international non-governmental organization based in Montreal, founded in 1994, whose mission is to support the development and implementation of practical and effective policies, programs, and projects designed to reduce crime and delinquency in communities, cities, and other geographic units and reinforce a sense of safety.

### **About Fundación Pasos Libres**

Fundación Pasos Libres is a Colombian not-for-profit organization that seeks to revolutionize the way to prevent and disrupt human trafficking through the design, development, and implementation of innovative strategies, methodologies, and technologies. Since 2017, Pasos Libres and IBM have run three technological competitions against human trafficking bringing together 324 participants, 56 industry experts and 15 partners, and creating 12 exceptional winning solutions and 68 prototypes. The competition model has also been replicated in Brazil and the United States.

### **About IBM Canada**

IBM Canada is headquartered in Markham, Ontario and is one of Canada's top 10 private R&D investors. IBM has a unique approach to collaboration that provides academic researchers, small and large business, start-ups and developers with business strategies and computing tools they need to innovate. For more information, please visit [www.ibm.com/ca](http://www.ibm.com/ca).

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