



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

Office of the Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings

23rd Conference of the Alliance against Trafficking in Persons

“It’s About People: National Leadership to End Human Trafficking”

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Closing Remarks of the OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings Mr. Valiant Richey

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

This is my **last speech** as an OSCE official and it has been so inspiring over the last day and a half to see that we are endowed with so many anti-trafficking leaders across the OSCE region.

Something is changing in the way our societies look at the problem of trafficking in human beings and exploitation. We are seeing that this challenge will not be solved by police officers and prosecutors alone, but it is going to take a **societal change**, it’s going to take **all of us**. From political leaders who are just starting to engage on this topic, to activists who have worked on it for years, from parliamentarians who can adopt the new laws and allocate resources, to survivors who fought back from exploitation and are now leading the movement with their expertise and passion.

We heard from an impressive set of speakers over the past day and a half, and I thank them for their insightful ideas and presentations. I would like to offer a summary of the discussions around ten points, a “**Decalogue of State anti-trafficking action**” if you will. The key points to move us from combating trafficking to one day *ending* it.

First, countries need a **National Anti-trafficking Coordinator**, someone in charge of directing the different ‘instruments’ of the anti-trafficking ‘orchestra’. The National Coordinator needs to be a prominent personality, in a high-level role in government, with convening authority and ideally be placed centrally in the government structure, like the Office of the Prime Minister for example, to be in a position to properly coordinate the other structures and ministries.

Second, countries need an **anti-trafficking commission or task force**, a mechanism to gather all the key agencies and actors around the same table, and for elaborating key strategies and

policies to prevent trafficking, to punish perpetrators and to protect victims. Alongside State agencies and ministries, around that table you should have survivors of trafficking – as we heard, their engagement and expertise is still a largely untapped resource in State’s anti-trafficking work, particularly in elaborating strategies and policies.

Third, a key and indispensable policy and strategy tool is a **National Action Plan**. NAPs ensure States anti-trafficking action is strategic, comprehensive and duly funded. It allows countries to be strategic and detailed in their planning, and to design efforts in line with the country’s specific needs, trafficking pattern and emerging trends.

Fourth, countries need an **independent National Rapporteur**. Stress here is on independent. National anti-trafficking rapporteurs can help countries collect data, identify trends and patterns, liaise with rapporteurs from other countries to compare those trends and pattern, to advise the government on sound and need-based courses of action.

My fifth point is around the need to get serious on **protection and prosecution**. The numbers are embarrassingly low, compared to the scale of the problem. We identify way too few victims, we systematically underserve those few we do identify (and do not recognize the specific needs that each victims carries), and we don’t seem to be able to provide justice at scale. We urgently need to reverse the trend.

Sixth - one way to help us scale up our identification and prosecution efforts is through engaging the financial sector and **financial investigations**. Trafficking in human beings is at its core a financially motivated crime. Financial investigations, can be used as evidence to trace the trafficking chain, and to seize illegal profits, which can then be used for compensating trafficking victims. Perhaps most importantly, financial investigations are an effective tactic to break the business cycle of human trafficking by cutting the lifeblood of exploitation – money.

Seventh, we must boldly address the intersection of **technology and trafficking**, one of the defining topics of the anti-trafficking conversation today. Online exploitation of children and adults is exploding. We need to react, and start regulating the online domain with State-led policies, for example mandating websites and technology companies to conduct proper due diligence on the harm that is too often conducted in plain sight on their platforms, and equipping the justice systems with the tools to shut down websites and platforms that facilitate harm and exploitation. Self-regulation has not worked and the problem has exploded, to the great benefit of traffickers and abusers. We know what needs to be done on the policy and legislative side; it’s time to do it.

Eight, and another area of action for Parliaments, is on the prevention of **labour exploitation in supply chains**. Today we are seeing more and more laws and policies mandating private companies and public buyers to conduct due diligence in their supply chains and establish protective measures. I believe this is the future of the fight against forced labour. The scale of the problem is such that we are not going to prosecute our way out of this problem; we need to couple prosecution efforts with strategic approaches that look at and leverage market-size forces – our purchases, our demand.

Now, when it comes to trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation, the approach is similar – if we want to stop trafficking, we need to stop paying for it. My ninth point is on **discouraging the demand** that fosters the huge and growing market for **sexual exploitation** worldwide: nearly \$100 billion a year. This very simply has to stop. We need a broad, societal, historic, cultural change in our approach, and it's about time we implement policies, from education to criminal justice measures, that will reduce the demand that is incentivizing trafficking and hold accountable men who abuse trafficking victims.

Which takes me to my tenth and most important point, and the reason for this conference: the **need for leadership and political will**. After the Palermo Protocol was signed 22 years ago, countries passed laws that criminalized trafficking and kick-started national anti-trafficking efforts, and that was great. But the work is far from done. Human trafficking changed and expanded, and so must our response. The good news is there are today positive examples of new and unprecedented levels of attention among political leaders and the broader public, as well as promising and innovative examples of policies, including on all the points I mentioned today. You saw some of those examples in this Conference. **What we need now is leadership**. Change does not happen by itself, we need leaders to carry it through, and help replicate these positive examples more widely. Ultimately, it is leadership and **political will** that can move us from “combating” trafficking to finally “ending” it.

Before I close the conference, allow me to express my gratitude.

Regarding my tenure in the OSCE, first, I wish to **thank you, the OSCE participating States** and the **Chair in Office** for your constant support and engagement. You are my primary ‘clients’. I tried to support your anti-trafficking efforts to the best of my abilities and I hope I lived up to your expectations.

My thanks also go to the previous Chairs of Italy, Slovakia, Albania, Sweden and Poland, for leading the organization in difficult years and for your steadfast support of my mandate and my work. A particular thanks to your **National Coordinators and Rapporteurs**, with whom we've built a solid and very useful network. Let me share a special thanks with the **United States** who seconded me to this post and remained a steady supporter of my Office and of its anti-trafficking mission.

I also wish to thank **Secretary General Helga Schmid**, who has been an extraordinary and vocal anti-trafficking champion, and who has trusted and supported me and my team over all these years. Before her, Thomas Greminger and Ambassador Radomir Bohac, who appointed me to this position and gave me this wonderful opportunity.

I also want to thank all OSCE colleagues from the network of the **anti-trafficking focal points**, working tirelessly in their structures and Missions in advancing ambitious and innovative work across the OSCE region.

And thanks go to our **external partners**, be it in the Alliance Expert Coordination team, in ICAT, or at the High-Level Committee on Management of the United Nations. And of course the anti-trafficking NGOs that carry out the work on the ground every day, with whom I enjoyed a continuous dialogue and cooperation.

And finally, I turn to my **team**. I suspect everyone in this room has experienced the joy of connecting with this great group. They are outstanding – and I wish to thank them for their commitment, competence, passion and humanity. I have learned so much from you all and will carry those lessons forward for the rest of my life.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Serving as Special Representative has been one of the great joys and honors of my life. This is a battle for humanity, but it can be won. In the words of Martin Luther King, “the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice.” We must sustain our hope and persevere.

We know what the right strategies are. Now is the time to **scale up our effort**. To champion this issue globally. To be brave. In the words of Theodore Roosevelt, to dare greatly so that we may know the triumph of high achievement. I call on all leaders to join us, to take action, to help us finally build a world free from exploitation

And with that, I close the 23rd Alliance Conference.