

PC.DEL/341/13
16 May 2013

ENGLISH
Original: FRENCH

STATEMENT BY THE EUROPEAN UNION AT THE 953rd MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL

Vienna, 16 May 2013

In response to the OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings

The European Union (EU) and its member States welcome Ms. Giammarinaro and thank her for her detailed presentation. Combating trafficking in human beings continues to be a necessary activity and must remain a priority for the OSCE and all participating States.

While the OSCE Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings was adopted nearly ten years ago, there are no data indicating that this criminal activity is diminishing, despite the efforts to combat it at the international and national levels. This long-term fight is first and foremost the responsibility of States themselves. With the assistance of the OSCE, among others, States must therefore continue to adapt their legislation and establish dedicated structures in order to effectively prosecute the perpetrators of this crime, as well as to aid victims and protect their rights.

Ms. Giammarinaro, the activities of your Office contribute to this goal. We appreciate the attention paid to victims, who are at the centre of our concerns. The EU gives them priority; the very recent publication by the European Commission of a compendium on the rights of victims of trafficking in human beings, aimed at enabling the authorities to help and protect them, attests to this. This priority is also confirmed in Directive 2012/29/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council, of 25 October 2012, establishing minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime.

In this regard, we note your recent recommendations, presented as a side event of the 22nd session of the United Nations Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice. In this communication, you also highlighted the joint work carried out within the Alliance against Trafficking in Persons, a platform for sharing good practices. We hope that the Alliance's 13th conference, which you are organizing on 25 and 26 June, will be constructive and will lead to operational conclusions.

We should like for the OSCE's action to be as concrete as possible. Beyond denouncing the plague of trafficking, it is essential to strengthen the penal response, for, as the 2013 edition of Eurostat indicates, the number of traffickers who have been convicted is declining. It is important to quickly identify victims of trafficking, and it is also necessary to continue the training activities for police officers and judges in conjunction with the OSCE field missions.

We recognize the essential role of the OSCE's other executive structures and institutions. We reiterate our support for close co-ordination between the OSCE's action and that of other international organizations, particularly the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, as provided for in the joint action plan for the period 2013–2014.

We welcome the OSCE's sustained efforts to combat trafficking in human beings. As you said, much has been accomplished in the past ten years. Your field visits are important in maintaining a fruitful dialogue with national authorities and civil society. Faced with a growing scourge, you are calling for a second wave of commitments, which might be reflected in an updated action plan. We are ready to explore your proposals with your Office and other participating States, at the instigation of the Ukrainian Chairmanship, in order to realize the full potential of the 2003 Action Plan, which in our view is nonetheless a very high-quality document.

We welcome the efforts of the Ukrainian Chairmanship and hope that the High-Level Conference to be convened by the Chairmanship in Kyiv on 10 and 11 June will suggest approaches for strengthening the OSCE's response in the fight against trafficking. The development of joint work with the OSCE's Partners for Co-operation, for example, is an initiative that points in the right direction.

In conclusion, we thank you, Ms. Giammarinaro, for your exemplary commitment. We wish you every success in your future activities.

The acceding country Croatia¹, the candidate countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia¹, Montenegro¹, Iceland² and Serbia¹, the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate countries Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina, the European Free Trade Association countries Liechtenstein and Norway, as well as Moldova, Armenia, Georgia, Andorra and San Marino, align themselves with this statement.

1 Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

2 Iceland continues to be a member of the European Free Trade Association.