



Permanent Mission of Ukraine
to the International
Organizations in Vienna

**Statement by the Delegation of Ukraine
in response to the OSCE Special Representative
and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human beings
Dr. Kari Johnstone**

As for delivery by Ambassador Yevhenii Tsymbaliuk,
Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna,
to the 1449th meeting of the Permanent Council,
09 November 2023

Mr. Chairperson,

The Delegation of Ukraine warmly welcomes to the Permanent Council meeting Dr. Kari Johnstone and sincerely congratulates her with the appointment as OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings.

We count on the continuation of fruitful cooperation with the Combating Trafficking in Human Beings Office under your skilful leadership and wish you every success in performing your important duties.

Dr. Kari Johnstone,

Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine has forced over 14 million people from their homes as refugees and IDPs, which represents around one-third of Ukrainian population. It remains the largest human displacement crisis in the world.

We are grateful to all international partners who provide the necessary assistance and support to Ukrainian refugees, most of whom are women and children. As their vulnerable situation puts them at risk for various forms of exploitation and trafficking, we see a need for enhanced awareness raising and preventive measures to help them avoid becoming victims of trafficking in persons.

In this context we also highlight the importance of the online initiative "Be Safe" to provide Ukrainians with critical safety information, minimize the risks of trafficking and get help, launched last year by the Office of the OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings.

Madam Special Representative,

Thousands of Ukrainians, including children, are forcibly deported from the invaded territories to Russia, including the most remote regions. In Russia, they face intimidation, ill-treatment, labour and sexual exploitation, trafficking in persons and other abuses and threats.

Already in the first OSCE Moscow Mechanism report of 12 April 2022 on the

russian aggression against Ukraine it was stressed that *“The massive displacement exposes children to numerous risks: the risk of being killed or injured during the displacement, the risk of human trafficking and exploitation, the risk of child labour, the risk of forced recruitment or the risk of gender-based violence. Appropriate measures must be put in place to protect children against these risks.”*

The forcible transfer or deportation of Ukrainian children also expose them to such grave violations as a change of the child’s personal status, including citizenship, separation from parents or guardians, illegal adoption, and other violations or abuses leading to their forced assimilation in russia. Such actions encompass numerous violations of international humanitarian law and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child by the russian federation.

These and many other facts were widely confirmed by the latest OSCE Moscow Mechanism mission of experts on the deportation of Ukrainian children to russia, which established, inter alia, that russia’s actions may amount to a crime against humanity of “deportation or forcible transfer of population”.

We underline the need for the OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings to pay special attention to the fate of all those illegally deported Ukrainians, especially children, in flagrant breach of international humanitarian law, and undertake concrete steps to help ensuring their immediate and safe return to Ukraine.

Ukraine counts on your continued support, Dr. Kari Johnstone, and looks forward to fostering our cooperation in the areas belonging to your mandate.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.