



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1495 Vienna, 7 November 2024

EU Statement in Response to the Report by the OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, Dr. Kari Johnstone

1. The European Union warmly welcomes the OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, Dr. Kari Johnstone, and thanks her for her report.
2. Trafficking in human beings is a serious crime, often committed within the framework of organised crime, and is a gross violation of fundamental rights explicitly prohibited by the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. Preventing and combating trafficking in human beings, and supporting the victims of trafficking, regardless of their country of origin, remains a priority for the European Union and its Member States.
3. The EU has a solid legal and policy framework in place to address trafficking in human beings, under the horizontal mandate of the EU Anti-trafficking Coordinator. In this regard, the recently revised EU Anti-trafficking Directive includes new rules that reinforce the fight against trafficking in human beings. These rules provide stronger tools for law enforcement and judicial authorities to investigate and prosecute new forms of exploitation, including those that take place online, and to ensure a higher level of assistance and support to victims. Finally, the EU Strategy on Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings (2021 – 2025) provides a comprehensive response to trafficking, from preventing the crime, and protecting and empowering victims to bringing traffickers to justice.

4. Russia's continued unprovoked, unjustifiable and illegal war of aggression against Ukraine has caused a significant number of Ukrainian refugees to seek shelter in EU Member States. The EU stands in full solidarity with Ukraine and its people. The EU activated the Temporary Protection Directive, offering quick assistance and a clear legal status to Ukrainian refugees. Moreover, the implementation of the European Commission's Common Anti-Trafficking Plan has complemented EU efforts to protect forcibly displaced persons by addressing the risks faced by those fleeing Russia's war.
5. We reiterate our gratitude to your Office in providing participating States with timely recommendations to mitigate the risk of human trafficking offline and online, including in the context of the flow of refugees fleeing the war. The BeSafe Campaign, which has reached more than 2.5 million Ukrainians overall, has further reinforced prevention by providing information to the population at risk.
6. Further, we continue to support the "policy to practice" methodology implemented by your Office in assisting participating States and Partners for Co-operation in the implementation of their OSCE anti-trafficking commitments.
7. We are grateful for your office's continued attention to the risk of human trafficking for the most vulnerable people in society, such as children, persons with a disability and persons belonging to a minority group, and for providing several reports with research and policy recommendations. We share your concern that these persons in vulnerable situations risk being overlooked, thus remaining invisible in anti-trafficking responses. As highlighted by the EU Anti-Trafficking Coordinator Diane Schmitt, during this year's EU Anti-Trafficking Day, trafficking in human beings is often hidden and invisible, meaning that many victims remain undetected. In order to raise awareness and increase visibility of victims, the European Commission has launched a campaign called "End human trafficking. Break the invisible chain".
8. Furthermore, we take positive note of your Office's work on the issue of technology-facilitated trafficking. Technology has broadened criminals' ability to recruit victims for different types of exploitation, in particular for sexual, but also for labour exploitation, the removal of organs, and illegal adoption of children and forced marriages. Children are at particular risk of falling victim to traffickers online. In this respect, we look forward to examining your recently published 'Policy Brief on the

Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence to Facilitate Trafficking in Persons' in greater detail.

9. We also commend your office for the simulation-based training exercises held this year, notably in Brühl/Germany and in Vicenza/Italy, fostering a multi-agency collaboration between all relevant stakeholders.
10. The EU reiterates its support of partnerships to ensure effective cooperation and coordination of efforts in the fight against trafficking in human beings. We encourage the Office of the Special Representative to continue cooperating with international partners and other relevant stakeholders in coordinating OSCE-wide anti-trafficking efforts, as well as keeping the topic of trafficking in human beings high on the OSCE agenda.
11. In conclusion, we take a very positive view of your work and thank you for your efforts. It is essential to ensure a comprehensive approach, which is human rights-based, victim-centred, gender-responsive and child-sensitive, when addressing trafficking in human beings. We look forward to continuing our co-operation with you and your team and wish you every success.

The Candidate Countries NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, SERBIA*, ALBANIA*, UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA*, and GEORGIA, as well as ANDORRA, MONACO and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

* North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Albania, and Bosnia and Herzegovina continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.