



Opening Remarks by Ambassador Janez Lenarčič,

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(ODIHR)

High-Level Conference
“Strengthening the OSCE response to Trafficking in Human Beings”

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Excellences, Distinguished guests, Ladies and gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to address you at this high-level conference organized by the Ukrainian OSCE Chairmanship. I would like to praise the Chairmanship for putting combating against trafficking in human beings high on the agenda of the OSCE. We need such strong political commitment in this difficult time of continued economic crisis, the effects of which also underscored the relevance of our effort against trafficking.

OSCE has been at the forefront of tackling trafficking in human beings for more than a decade. The Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) started working in this field as far back as in 1999. Subsequent establishment of the Office of the OSCE's Special Representative and Coordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and the adoption of the OSCE Action Plan in 2003 enabled the organization to accumulate unique and valuable experience, which has benefited both the participating States and non-state actors. We have come a long way, but we still have not reached the destination: the world free of trafficking in human beings

Combating trafficking in human beings is an area where cooperation among various actors – national and international - is especially needed, given its multi-sectoral and often multinational character. This is the fourth 'P', besides prosecution, prevention and protection that are included in the Action Plan – partnership.

Our office has been working on the topic of partnership in assisting the victims of trafficking in a national context for almost ten years, since the development of the Handbook on National Referral Mechanisms. Just two weeks ago we organized a regional roundtable on National Referral Mechanism. The experts,

responsible for forming the national anti-trafficking policies from five Central Asian states, as well as Belgium, Moldova and the Netherlands had a chance to exchange their experience, to debate and look for solutions. From the ODIHR experience such working-level events are most useful for building national and international partnerships. Only through establishing effective links among the experts and practitioners can we achieve effective cooperation in preventing and combating trafficking and assisting the victims.

There are many other areas where our efforts could or should be strengthened. For example confiscation of criminal assets, establishment and functioning of state compensation funds for victims of crimes, including victims of trafficking, proactive investigation and prosecution, the concept of presumed victim of trafficking and its application and many others. Where the issues of national legislation are concerned I would like to reiterate the readiness of ODIHR to provide legislative support upon request of any OSCE participating State.

As to the issues arising at the international level, then this brings us back to the topic of partnership. Not only states should establish close working relations and share their experience. The same is valid for the international organizations working in the field of human trafficking and exploitation. I would particularly like to stress the importance of cooperation and coordination among international organizations working on anti-trafficking issues and highlight the value of the regular “Alliance against trafficking” conferences for bringing such coordination in practice.

In the context of partnerships and experience sharing I would like to commend the work of the OSCE field offices, which are the source of country-specific knowledge for the rest of the OSCE. Their projects are often innovative and reflect the current needs and we should look into the possibilities to replicate the

best of their practices throughout the OSCE region. Such projects as education of Mass Media on journalist investigation of trafficking in human beings cases, undertaken by the OSCE Office in Baku, awareness raising among social workers on their role in assisting victims of trafficking and trainings for judges, organized by the OSCE Centre in Astana, or projects addressing trafficking of children, especially trafficking for begging developed by the OSCE Presence in Albania, just to name a few. They all deserve support and attention. ODIHR is ready, in cooperation with the field offices to support regional initiatives in sharing good practices achieved through the country-specific projects.

Ladies and gentlemen, a decade has passed since the adoption of the OSCE Action Plan. It contains all the key tools needed to effectively prevent trafficking in human beings, protect the victims and prosecute the perpetrators regardless of the type of trafficking and exploitation. Moreover, there is no limitation on the participating States to go beyond recommendations of the Action Plan and adopt more progressive anti-trafficking measures. What is needed is the will of the states to move forward and dedicate more efforts and resources to fighting trafficking in human beings. The OSCE and its institutions, first of all the Office of the OSCE Special Representative and ODIHR, will continue to provide the support for the participating States, and serve as a forum for consultation, as a tool for coordination and as a source of expertise.

I conclude by expressing my confidence that this high level gathering will show us the way towards strengthening our response to human trafficking.

I wish all of us fruitful discussions,

Thank you.