

**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe****Special Representative and Co-ordinator  
for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings****Speech by Eva Biaudet  
Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking  
in Human Beings  
at the Permanent Council Meeting of November 22, 2007****Your Excellencies, Honourable Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

A year ago I had the pleasure and privilege to address the Permanent Council for the first time in my capacity as a Special Representative of the CiO and for this very occasion. It was the presentation of the first Annual Report - "From Policy to Practice: Combating Trafficking in Human Beings in the OSCE Region" - prepared by my Office in line with the Ljubljana Ministerial Decision of 2005. The year has passed and I would like to thank all the delegations, the OSCE Chairmanship, the Secretary General, and the OSCE executive structures for support, co-operation and encouragement. I cannot imagine any chance of moving forward without it. After all, everything what is being done by the Office of the Special Representative is done for the participating States, for the people and for the protection of human rights and dignity of individuals in the OSCE area.

Since the beginning of my mandate, drawing from the experience of the Organization to address the scourge of human trafficking in the last decade, I have engaged into a broad and thorough consultative process with the delegations of the participating States, authorities in the capitals, members of Parliaments, my colleagues in the OSCE and other international organizations, NGOs – our partners in the Alliance against Trafficking in Persons. This process led us to the agenda of 2007, chosen on the basis of common values and shared vision of priorities, evidence-based expertise and cumulative knowledge gained by the international community, with a view to generate actions that would help us **to reach a turning point** in the fight against human trafficking for all forms of exploitation.

There is an on-going debate on **what we mean by a turning point**, do we have the statistics that can reflect any dynamics, how to assess the progress achieved if not in numbers? What is the added value of high-level conferences and expert meetings as a part of our activities which require substantial resources?

**We mean** the implementation of a set of proven measures which help to achieve synergy and avoid fragmentation of States' efforts, to get a real picture of the status of THB in a given country, to self-assess the efficiency of anti-trafficking measures and adequacy of the legislation, to unite the society in establishing a climate of zero tolerance towards human rights violations and exploitation of human beings as the

main incentive of THB incompatible with democracy and civilization. These measures include harmonized legislation and its due implementation, well functioning coordinating structures, systemic and integrated approach reflected in national anti-trafficking programs, self-monitoring and reporting mechanisms, and institutionalized co-operation between State institutions and civil society. Easy to say, sometimes difficult to accomplish. Let me, nevertheless, reiterate that the allocation of resources and budgetary planning is central to successful implementation of these practical steps. Experience shows that investigating and prosecuting the crime of THB and affording adequate protection and assistance to victims require both significant resources and comprehensive planning.<sup>1</sup> Many countries in the OSCE region have demonstrated in practice their willingness to pursue the whole set of anti-trafficking A-B-C, but still there are gaps in national legal basis, in some instances slow motion towards ratification of international legal instruments and their implementation – such as the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Trafficking Protocol, lack of internal and external co-ordination and definitely lack of data collection and analysis. For this very reason we don't build our policies on statistics – we do know that existing figures still reflect only a tiny sector of what has been disclosed and identified. The rest, due to the extremely lucrative nature of the crime, remains beyond imagination.

It does not mean that statistics in our case is useless, no, we have to segregate and analyse the data we get to extrapolate it to a broader picture and estimate the scale of THB and emerging trends and tendencies. And we do believe that it is in the interest of governments to collect accurate qualitative and quantitative information, independent research and systematic reporting on the magnitude and nature of human trafficking in their country. This is crucial in reviewing and measuring progress made at national level, in evaluating the impact of counter-measures, in revealing shortcomings and successes in the implementation of laws and policies.

It is for this very reason that in 2007 we started to actively promote the concept of National Monitoring and Reporting Mechanisms in the OSCE region. They enhance national ownership in combating human trafficking and contribute to the responsible and strategically planned counteraction of each and every State in the implementation of the OSCE commitments.

The framework of these OSCE commitments has been developed in the course of 2000-2006. Each year we add to this bulk of political will of the participating States drawing from new challenges and new, deeper knowledge of the scope of the problem, as well as from the assessment of our own shortcomings or failures. This stand fully justifies our support of a new substantial Ministerial Decision on Combating THB for Labour Exploitation which, as an increasing threat, deserves much more concerted efforts and sophistication. Our position on this aspect of THB is based on the results of 2005-2007 studies and analysis of information provided by the participants of high-level Alliance conferences and on other sources reliable. It is our strong belief that this decision should become a document which makes a difference,

---

<sup>1</sup> One rescue operation can require 600 policemen and preparations for prosecution may take up to two years. One rescue action can involve hundreds of victims in a sweatshop or in a brothel or only a few in restaurants or in domestic service. The amount of investigative work and resources do not always correlate to number of victims. Source: SR visit to the US (Washington, 10-13 October 2007), Department of Justice, Oral Statement by Mr Robert J. Moosy Jr. Director Human Trafficking Prosecutions Unit, Criminal Section, US Department of Justice.

which really matters. We cannot afford anything less than our commitments of 2000-2006, anything that devaluates the OSCE stand in the fight against human trafficking renown far beyond our region.

It is also in this regard that the Office of the Special Representative organized a high-level conference “Assistance to Trafficked Persons: We Can Do Better”, as a review of national and international experience and research-based evidence calling upon all anti-trafficking stakeholders to listen to the voices of victims. From them we can learn facts no statistics can describe. We have had positive responses from the participants of these events, from those who have come to Vienna as a centre of expertise and for well-intentioned advice.

Let me underline that, in compliance with the spirit and letter of my mandate, in our activities we kept the geographical balance in addressing the THB problem in the countries of origin, transit and destination and we tackled THB as a cross-dimensional phenomenon, paying due attention to the three dimensions within the OSCE concept of comprehensive security. We believe that any other approach is irrelevant and failing to achieve our common goals in their entirety.

At the same time I have to reiterate that such an approach fully integrates our advocacy for the human rights of trafficked persons, being in the centre of all actions taken in the areas of protection, prevention or prosecution and efforts to design, implement and evaluate all anti-trafficking policies and actions. This requirement is also vividly reflected in the OSCE Action Plan strongly recommending to ensure “that measures adopted for the purpose of preventing and combating trafficking in persons do not have an adverse impact on the rights and dignity of persons, including their freedom of movement”. Combating transnational organized crime does not contradict pursuing compassionate and humanitarian treatment of its victims. On the contrary, evidence from OSCE states such as Italy and the US prove it being a precondition for successful prosecution of traffickers. A modern day slavery that, according to the OSCE Maastricht Ministerial Decision, “...constitutes an abhorrent violation of the dignity and rights of human beings”.

I believe that this approach should also be gender-sensitive. It means that all actions, programmes and policies should be refined in order to become appropriate and relevant to both sexes through an examination of how men and women are differentially affected by THB in any particular country, including by THB for forced and bonded labour. In our activities we encourage the participating States to ensure that all actions, programmes and policies avoid entrenching existing inequalities between women and men and strive to have the opposite effect.

To be more concrete, we focused our attention on the following areas which are directly related to the implementation of the OSCE anti-trafficking commitments and recommendations of the Action Plan helping to move forward in combating THB through advanced and comprehensive measures to investigate and prosecute the crime of THB, to prevent it whenever possible and to protect those already trafficked. These areas included:

- Encouraging action at the national level and assisting in establishing national anti-trafficking structures;
- Promoting evidence-based policies and programs;
- Stepping up efforts to prevent THB;

- Prioritizing action against child trafficking;
- Being inclusive and address all forms of THB;
- Guaranteeing effective assistance and access to justice for all victims.

These are fundamental policy and institutional indicators which signal to the SR the existence of political engagement with the problem at the national level and efforts to develop a systematic, comprehensive and co-ordinated response.

I will not take your time describing our activities – they have been reflected in the text of the Report. I would rather draw your attention to a number of issues related to the results of our joint efforts and those to be addressed in the nearest perspective.

The best proof of the recognition of the validity of the OSCE approach to THB is, I believe, the increasing reflection of this strategic approach in national and regional programs, such as the CIS Program of Co-operation on Combating THB for 2007-2010, the EU Plan for Best Practices, Standards and Mechanisms to Prevent and Combat THB, and national action plans. For example, we were delighted to know that the recent CIS Parliamentary Assembly in Saint-Petersburg was considering proposals related to the adoption of a Model Law on Combating THB. For me, as a Finnish national, it was important to see the positive developments in Finland with regard to the work on the revision of the National Action Plan – we will certainly provide all our support and OSCE expertise to this endeavour, as well as to others requesting assistance. In this regard I would also mention the high potential of our co-operation with the International Training Centre on Migration and Trafficking in Human Beings established in Belarus which is providing training for the law enforcement, officials, representatives of civil society, and other interested stakeholders far beyond the CIS region. I believe that the growing demand for the OSCE expertise and assistance, upon request, may be met both in countries of origin and destinations - as well as in our bilateral co-operation with the participating States.

As examples of good bilateral co-operation and recognition of OSCE's expertise I also want to mention the assistance provided by my Office to the Swedish Government in the organization and implementation of the Nordic Expert Seminar on trafficking for forced labour in Stockholm in May and my testimony at the US Helsinki Commission hearing on combating trafficking for forced labour purposes in Washington, D.C., in October 2007.

Other good examples of co-operation and full support from your side, dear Ambassadors, are particularly visible at our regional events, like the Vilnius Conference "Preventing THB: Challenges and Solutions" or the forthcoming Central Asia round-table being organized together with the State Committee on Migration and Employment of the Republic of Kyrgyzstan and the UNODC in the framework of the UN Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking. Being prepared in close collaboration, from the very first moment, such forums provide an opportunity of broad participation for the governmental officials and NGOs active in the countries of the region. They contribute to the visibility of the OSCE "in the field" and to capacity building, engagement of new social partners, like the media or the business-community, and prove the benefits of co-operation between the OSCE and its Alliance partners with the participating States. In this regard let me cordially thank the Delegations of Lithuania and Kyrgyzstan, as well as the governmental institutions of these countries, for their support and endorsement of our regional initiatives.

The agenda of 2007, forming our Platform for Action, leads us to our strategic planning for 2008, which has to address the most complicated issues, including child trafficking or prevention as such. Many of them, of course, cannot be resolved within one budget year, and have to be dealt with in a consistent manner. In this regard we will continue promoting the establishment of national monitoring and reporting mechanisms, and provide technical assistance to the participating States interested in the implementation of this strong recommendation.

Stepping up efforts to prevent human trafficking, we will strive to explore and specify the linkages between THB and the structural problems arising from an environment where the exploitation of individuals is possible. We are planning to initiate a high-profile debate with the participation of prominent personalities, intellectuals, world leaders and policymakers. The aim of this initiative is to generate a political discussion on the impact of THB upon our societies and its links to globalization, economic development, migration policies, gender discrimination and other structural factors. Prevention will remain in the centre of our activities being undertaken together with the UNODC and other partners in the framework of the UN Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking.

We will attach due attention to the issues of prosecution and access to justice, as to the core components of effective anti-trafficking responses, and will invite experts to review existing case law, challenges in THB investigations and prosecutions.

We will never drop the issue of child trafficking – as long as it exists in our societies and undermines the future itself for the most vulnerable and least protected. Together with the Alliance partners we will come with relevant proposals for 2008.

Our readiness to develop further bilateral co-operation with all participating States goes without saying – it is our obligation and the crucial part of the mandate. We will build upon the advances made in 2007 and regard consultations, joint planning and coordination for 2008 as essential to this process.

I have enjoyed the informal discussions with many of you, enabling a real dialogue on the future role of the OSCE in the fight against trafficking in human beings. Clearly other international organisations have also stepped up their level of activity, in particular the UNODC here in Vienna. My intention has been to strengthen the good work of finding synergies and sharing experiences that was started in the Alliance Expert Co-ordination Team which includes the biggest international anti-trafficking actors. At the same time in all our efforts and in all forms of co-operation with other international organizations we actively promote the OSCE approaches and mechanisms, as reflected in the OSCE commitments. These are indeed an advanced political instrument both by the scope of unanimous acceptance by the 56 participating States, but also by its comprehensive and cross dimensional human rights approach. They were elaborated in an inspiring international atmosphere enabling OSCE countries to put up a strategy of far reaching goals and principles, definitely not all within existing legislation at the time, which was rather spectacular and something to be proud of. It is perhaps time to reconfirm the value of such a climate of determined co-operation, to fight a common enemy operating with no respect of our borders. Because we still would very much need it.

The enemy is perhaps closer to us than ever, it has also learned its lessons and become more sophisticated and perhaps more cruel and prepared to take an advantage for every loophole or weakness of our societies. And indeed there is a lot left to do at the same time as it is necessary to recognize all the good efforts done to accomplish a comprehensive implementation and a basis for eradicating trafficking in human beings. Will the OSCE also in the future be equipped to foster the role of forerunner, exposing common challenges and debating the most difficult and complex issues honouring the idea that only true and open dialogue will push us towards resolving this threat on our every day life security?

To conclude, I would thank our colleagues from the OSCE structures, namely the ODIHR, SPMU, OCEEA, Senior Gender Adviser, Border Unit, ATU, PPIS, and our focal points in the field operations and many others for their day-by-day internal co-operation with the OSR which enables the Organization to speak in one voice, contribute to each others efforts and bring this coordinated synergy and its results to the participating States.

We look forward to your feedback, dear Ambassadors, with regard to the Report presented for your consideration, and for the continued support from the participating States in the implementation of our common commitment to eradicate modern slavery and ensure human security and safety for all.

Thank you for your attention.