



United States Mission to the OSCE

On the Occasion of World Day Against Trafficking in Persons

As delivered by Political Officer Erol Ozakcay
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
July 25, 2024

I am delivering this statement on behalf of Canada, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, the United Kingdom, and my own country, the United States. On July 30th, we will join people around the globe to recognize the World Day Against Trafficking in Persons.

This year's theme implores us all to *Leave No Child Behind in the Fight Against Human Trafficking*. In the OSCE region, children are subjected to trafficking in all its forms, including victimization for forced labor, for forced criminality, and for sexual exploitation.

Russia's war against Ukraine has precipitated the largest displacement of people in Europe since the Second World War. Ukrainian refugees and internally displaced persons continue to face a heightened risk of trafficking. Children, who globally make up an estimated one-third of trafficking victims, are especially vulnerable. Russia's actions have separated many Ukrainians from their families and other support networks, increasing their susceptibility to trafficking.

Across the OSCE region, we must do more. This includes supporting prevention efforts to stop trafficking before it happens and tailoring victim protection with a focus on the needs of the child. It also means increasing the prosecution of those responsible and enhancing partnerships to tackle the transnational nature of the crime.

We welcome holistic, victim- and survivor-centered, gender-responsive, trauma-informed, and culturally and age-appropriate care for child victims and survivors. We encourage all participating States to further adopt best practices to support them. These include establishing child-friendly spaces for care, tailoring training for service providers, and implementing national referral mechanisms that reduce the risk of re-exploitation and mitigate the lasting effects of human trafficking.

Addressing emerging trafficking trends and the unique vulnerabilities of children to familial trafficking and extraterritorial sexual exploitation and abuse requires cross-dimensional approaches.

Mister Chair, all young people deserve a childhood free from exploitation. We strongly support the efforts of the Special Representative Dr. Kari Johnstone and her office, as well as the work of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights and the field missions and other teams within OSCE executive structures to combat human trafficking.

Their work, especially to prevent and respond to trafficking amid the humanitarian crisis stemming from Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, remains essential to fulfill our OSCE commitments.

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