



IOM International Organization for Migration
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Alliance against Trafficking in Persons Conference: “Stolen Lives, Stolen Money: The Price of Modern-Day Slavery”

Opening Remarks by Ms. Laura Thompson
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Your Excellencies, distinguished colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

It is an honour to present to you this morning at the start of this high level event discussing an issue on which we have all worked very closely. I would like to thank the OSCE, and the Special Representative Maria Grazia Giammarinaro, for inviting me to speak today.

The last decade has seen substantial movement and the improvement of efforts to combat trafficking in human beings. An increasing number of states have **enacted legislation and implemented programs** to assist trafficking victims detected within their borders and those returned from abroad. Since the UN Trafficking Protocol to the UN Convention against Transnational Crime entered into force ten years ago, signatory states have taken steps to comply with its provisions. During this period of time, there has also been substantial development in the international community’s recognition of the severity and heinousness of this crime.

Despite these significant results, human trafficking continues to be a **pervasive and lucrative criminal endeavour**. Organized criminal groups earn an estimated 32 billion dollars in profit per year through the sale, exploitation and abuse of victims of trafficking. In Europe in 2010 alone, 9,548 presumed victims were identified primarily by police. This number, of course, represents only the tip of the iceberg with regard to the potential total numbers of victims in the region since it does not include those victims who remained unidentified.

In recent years, the global economic crisis, coupled with the expansion of new labour markets, service industries and employment opportunities, has also created new challenges to prevent exploitation. **Less noticed forms of exploitation** have gained traction with traffickers, including, the trafficking of male migrants for the purpose of forced labour. A recent IOM report, published together with the Nexus Institute, highlighted the particular circumstances of seafarers and fishers trafficked for labour exploitation from Ukraine. New migration flows, such as those currently being identified in South Eastern Europe, have also put pressure on governments to cope with large groups of migrants from new countries of origin. And new groups of vulnerable migrants have emerged globally with an increase in xenophobia, cuts in government services and cost-saving business measures.

As an organization, IOM continues to provide assistance to states in the development and delivery of programs, studies and technical expertise on combatting migrant smuggling and trafficking in persons. In the course of IOM’s work, three areas have emerged requiring additional effort. These include addressing the role played by consumers and corporate

supply chains as root causes of human trafficking; the protection of victims through their identification and through the prosecution of traffickers; and finally, the development of sustainable partnerships with stakeholders at the national, regional and international level.

Addressing Demand and Multinational Supply Chains

It is essential, when discussing the root causes of trafficking in human beings, that they not be confused with the push factors driving migrants to leave their homes. Although economic hardship, political instability and social, as well as state sanctioned, discrimination underlie the vulnerability of potential victims, the **demand for cheap goods and services** in countries of destination is perhaps the most significant root cause. As such, it must be addressed accordingly. Awareness raising campaigns for consumers, such as IOM's ***Buy Responsibly*** campaign in Europe, are aimed at reducing the demand. In fact one of the launches occurred here in Vienna in 2010 in the MuseumsQuartier.

Through such campaigns, consumers are made aware of the origins of products that they purchase. Educated consumers put pressure on retailers to ensure that their goods are not produced using the labour of trafficked individuals.

In addition to consumer education, more attention has recently been given to the role played by private companies in combatting human trafficking. Rapid globalization and a growing pool of workers have substantially impacted their vulnerability at all skill levels. Companies that engage in business on a large scale, in multiple countries, use increasingly **complex international supply chains** to produce products and provide services. Such supply chains are sometimes compromised by exploitive and unethical labour practices, often without the knowledge of the parent corporation. The growing use of recruitment agencies to provide companies with workers is one area that has been particularly vulnerable to abuse. Practices of recruiters are sometimes unregulated, leading to widespread abuses that include misleading employment terms and conditions, false job promises, excessive recruitment fees and, in the most extreme cases, debt bondage and labour trafficking. With the goal of increasing the integrity and transparency of the international recruitment industry, IOM has proposed an ***International Recruitment Integrity System (IRIS)***. IRIS is intended to be an accreditation and monitoring process of international labour recruiters, monitored by accredited counterparts in countries of origin and destination. This system will reduce the vulnerability of migrant workers, as well as allow for higher financial gains for both migrants and their employers.

Protecting Victims

In 2012, IOM assisted in 6,394 cases of victims and potential victims of trafficking globally. These victims were of 66 different nationalities. The identification of trafficking victims presents a second on-going challenge to the effective protection of vulnerable individuals, and, especially, migrants. Criminal organizations continue to develop their methods and means of exploiting victims, **making it essential that methods of identification keep pace**. As mentioned, despite the fact that victims of trafficking have been traditionally female, a growing number of men are being identified as trafficking victims.

Of the cases assisted by IOM in 2012, 45% involved male victims of trafficking. In addition, 48% of cases assisted involved forced labour as the type of exploitation. Mechanisms used to identify victims of trafficking must take these new trends into consideration.

Also in the past year, 73% of the cases assisted were externally trafficked. As those of us here are aware, many of the same mechanisms used to smuggle migrants across borders are also being used to bring victims of trafficking across borders. It is only through proper identification that victims gain access to their internationally protected rights, as well as access to receiving the necessary services that protect them from re-victimization and additional traumatization. A confluence of the factors presented above, has often resulted in the punishment of victims for the crimes of their abusers, a situation which must be avoided at all cost.

Also important to note is **that the process of identification is not an exact science**, and there is often a fine line separating a trafficked person from an exploited or abused migrant. A person being identified as a victim of trafficking means that he or she may be eligible for temporary or permanent residence, safe accommodation, medical and psychosocial support, skills training, and other forms of assistance. On the other hand, an irregular migrant with similar needs often receives none of the above mentioned forms of assistance. In my view, this disproportionate response is not logical, and only hinders our efforts to identify victims of trafficking. We would be more effective in identifying and protecting victims of trafficking if we prioritized the rights and needs of irregular migrants, rather than focusing in levelling administrative or criminal sanctions for the manner of their entry or stay.

As I have mentioned in other fora, there is no quick or easy solution to strengthen our ability to identify and protect victims of trafficking, **but a greater commitment to protecting all migrants – regardless of legal status** - may well be a precondition.

Cooperation with OSCE and Reaffirming Multi-Agency Partnerships

In regards to cooperation and multi-agency partnerships, we have to continuously strengthen **our relationships** in the fight against trafficking, or **we risk duplicating efforts, ignoring significant gaps, and missing opportunities to leverage our comparative strengths** in pursuit of our common goal.

Between IOM and the OSCE, I am confident we have a strong foundation on which to build. We collaborated at national and regional levels to strengthen protection of trafficked persons, and improve their access to justice, and we continue to advocate jointly throughout the OSCE region for policies that protect victims of trafficking from legal penalties for activities committed as a direct result of their situation as victims of trafficking. We have also worked to reduce the vulnerability of migrants as a means of preventing their exploitation. The **OSCE's Alliance Against Trafficking in Persons Expert Coordination Team (AECT)**, of which IOM is an active member, has facilitated improved partnerships with non-governmental organizations that are so essential to ensuring the human rights orientation and long-term sustainability of counter-trafficking measures.

But we must recognize too that our traditional tripartite alliance of governments, intergovernmental organizations, and non-governmental organizations are insufficient to

address the challenges we face. 2010 was the first year in which more victims of labour trafficking were referred to IOM for assistance than victims of sex trafficking, and the ensuing trend is pushing us to re-think our traditional approaches. In doing so, we've recognized the unique leverage of private companies to make a difference – particularly along supply chains that stretch across the borders of many countries and to labour recruitment practices.

Multi-sectorial partnerships are critical if we are to make progress in the fight against human trafficking in the next decade. Only once we are able to effectively marshal the collective commitment and capacities will we begin to **make noticeable progress towards eradicating this crime.**

Conclusion

Taking into account the progress made on this issue and the continuing defies presented, those of us who work to address this issue must continue to come together to address the areas at which this crime intersects with current trends in globalization and new challenges presented. Close coordination and cooperation amongst all stakeholders involved in combatting trafficking is necessary, whether it is between organizations working at the international level, between organizations and governments, civil society, individuals or business entities.

Over the last ten years, there have been many initiatives to combat human trafficking; however, I strongly believe that those that have been the most successful involved close partnerships between the actors involved.

In light of this, I look forward to the collaboration that will take place in the coming days, as well as to hearing the reflections and experiences of my distinguished colleagues.

Thank you.