

ALLIANCE AGAINST TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS
“An Agenda for Prevention: Non-Discrimination and Empowerment” (11-12 October 2012)

Opening Remarks

Speaker: **Ambassador Frank Cogan, Head of Irish OSCE Chairmanship Taskforce,
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It is an honour to be here today and, on behalf of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Eamon Gilmore, to welcome you all to this Alliance against Trafficking in Persons Conference. I am honoured to be speaking alongside my fellow panellists and would like to pay particular tribute to the work of the Special Representative and Coordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, Maria Grazia Giammarinaro, in convening this Conference addressing non-discrimination and empowerment, two vitally important aspects of the fight against human trafficking.

The Irish Chairmanship has made the fight against human trafficking one of its priorities for 2012. The Chairmanship dedicated this year's Human Dimension Seminar in Warsaw to the issue of the Rule of Law framework for combating Trafficking in Human Beings. The Seminar clearly concluded that non-discrimination and equality before the law – as key elements of a rule of law framework – are necessary for the effective prevention of human trafficking. This Alliance Conference is an important continuation of those discussions

It is important to understand in detail how the fight against discrimination and the fight against human trafficking are linked and to consider what this means for our responses to trafficking in human beings.

Even in these difficult economic times we cannot, nor should we, accept or tolerate an à la carte approach to human rights and equality principles. We must continuously evaluate what we do and what we fail to do and strive to meet the highest possible standards. There is no doubt that discrimination can make particular groups and individuals more vulnerable to human trafficking. Equally, trafficked persons can face discrimination in their countries of destination.

The fight against trafficking of persons, particularly the trafficking of women and children, who are the most vulnerable, can only be won by effectively combining robust legislation with other policy measures to tackle the causes of this vulnerability.

Trafficking prevention broadly takes two forms: first, through reducing potential victims' vulnerability by addressing the factors that make them susceptible to trafficking; and second, through increasing the risks for potential traffickers.

Every measure to protect trafficked persons or prosecute traffickers has some preventative effect. It may be the deterrent effect of a successful prosecution or high sentence on traffickers or it may be reducing a trafficked person's vulnerability to further exploitation or re-trafficking through providing assistance. However, these measures need to be complemented by other prevention-specific activities if they are to deliver a holistic anti-trafficking response. The expertise and experience of NGOs and International Organisations working in the field should be seen by States as vital assets in this endeavour. I am pleased that a large number of NGOs and civil society practitioners are present at this Alliance Conference.

Vulnerability to human trafficking is far-reaching, spanning multiple different areas such as age, socio-economic status, nationality, membership of a minority group, education-level, immigration status, or gender. Traffickers often prey on people who are hoping for a better life, lack employment opportunities, have an unstable home life, or have a history of sexual abuse. These conditions are present in all spheres of society.

But in order to allow policymakers to produce sustainable prevention and development policies, research must identify the strongest indicators of trafficking experienced by marginalized groups. A data collection system has been developed in my own country, Ireland, whereby all allegations of human trafficking made to NGOs active in the anti-human trafficking field and to the Irish Police, An Garda Síochána, are reported to the Anti Human Trafficking Unit of the Department of Justice and Equality in a standardised format. This data strategy provides a useful framework for information on the nature and extent of human trafficking in Ireland. I am aware that similar data collection systems exist in other countries also. The standardisation of these data collection systems will go some way to providing an evidential basis for any broad based future interventions.

In conclusion, I am certain that this Conference will provide an opportunity for new ideas to be explored and policies formed. I hope that the discussions will be useful in identifying good practice

and areas where further action is desirable. I am confident that the meeting will contribute to a more effective implementation of existing commitments and perhaps also encourage the development of new approaches to evolving challenges. I am grateful again for the crucial work of the Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and hope that further progress on trafficking will also be achieved during the incoming Ukrainian Chairmanship.

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