



THE HOLY SEE

2016 Human Dimension Implementation Meeting

Working Session 7: Humanitarian issues and other commitments.

Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings

Thursday, 22 September 2016

Mr. Moderator,

The fight against trafficking in human beings expresses the very core of the OSCE's mission: True and lasting security, stability and international co-operation begins with respect for the inherent dignity of the human person. The trade in human persons constitutes a shocking offence against human dignity and a grave violation of fundamental human rights, since it is an affront to fundamental values which are shared by all cultures and peoples, values rooted in the very nature of the human person. Pope Francis calls trafficking in human beings a "plague in the body of contemporary humanity."¹

Trafficking degrades the inherent human dignity and this crime is of particular gravity when we take into consideration the worrying trend of the global increase in trafficking of children, especially the trafficking of unaccompanied minors in the current migration flow, as well as the trafficking and sale of human embryos. Many of these minors, often because of their families' poverty, which leaves them more vulnerable, are victims of exploiters who assume the role of protectors, assuring them of protection and assistance. The exploiters are present not only during the journey but also upon arrival in OSCE countries. Dignity, future and peaceful growth are denied to those children. They often fall prey to organized crime chains, are exploited in multiform activities ranging from begging to theft, to illegal activities, such as drug dealing, the sale of stolen goods and prostitution, to the removal of organs, as well as domestic servitude and labour slavery that has become a powerful global business, a lucrative trade, involving many countries of origin, transit and destination. These children are victims of such traumas that their recovery, in terms of physical and mental health, requires long-term commitment without the certainty of success.

A new element in this framework is the globalization of this trade, the development of a global market which exploits extreme poverty and vulnerability, especially of many minors who try to escape intolerable conditions of misery and violence. Moreover, in the globalized world, we are facing another sad reality, namely "the globalization of indifference"² which stands idly by, even if sometimes it displays simple indignation or a sense of compassion when faced with the heart-

¹ Pope Francis, Speech on the occasion of "Venerdì della misericordia", 12 August 2016.

² Pope Francis, Message for the celebration of the XLIX World Day of Peace, 1 January 2016.

rending horror of a young girl forced to sell herself or of a young boy who is used as a ‘tank’ of organs to be sold to the best client.

The Holy See is strongly convinced that in order to counter effectively the trafficking in human beings, more focused action is required to address its root causes. Trafficking in human beings cannot be tackled only by redefining or creating new legislative norms and fighting crime and criminals, but must be challenged by fighting that which feeds and ferments its poisonous existence among us. A convergence of efforts is necessary: a mentality that is centered on the unique dignity of every person, assured punishment of traffickers, a real fight against corruption, promotion of voluntary organ donation while punishing the selling of organs from trafficked persons, prosecution of clients of prostitution provided by trafficked persons, correct teaching in schools of the mutual relations between man and woman and the fairness of mass media in reporting the damages created by trafficking. Finally, cooperation among the various organizations concerned with this problem is critical. In fact, while legislation should be continuously adjusted and adapted to the evolution of the phenomenon of trafficking, the working together of public and private institutions and the contribution of volunteers will guarantee that no person may be bought or sold in violation of his or her dignity and fundamental human rights, because he or she has been created free and in God’s image and should not be treated as a slave.

All necessary measures should be put in place to counter this horrifying crime, where even the most innocent ones are not spared from the insatiable race for profit, nor from deviant desires for pleasure.

The Holy See is committed to continuing its efforts in countering human trafficking and is actively engaged in building a better world, especially for the poor and oppressed. In fact, the Catholic Church, through its global presence and network of charitable, educational, social and pastoral institutions, stands on the front line in combating trafficking in human beings. It has joined its capacities and efforts with other partners, religious and civil, in this field, and will remain committed to give its specific contribution to the common engagement in countering this scourge on a national, regional and international level.

In closing, I would like to repeat the call of Pope Francis: *“Human trafficking is a crime against humanity. We must unite our efforts to free the victims and stop this increasingly aggressive crime which threatens not only individuals but the basic values of society and of international security and justice, to say nothing of the economy, and the fabric of the family and our very coexistence.”*³

Thank you, Mr. Moderator.

³ Pope Francis, Address on the occasion of the Presentation of the Letters of Credence, 12 December 2013.