

***Address by Mr. J.G. de Hoop Scheffer,  
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***"Human trafficking: the dark side of Europe"***

***On the occasion of the Ambassadors' Lunch***

***Kurhaus Hotel, 16 December 2002***

***(± 15 min.)***

***(Introduction)***

Excellencies,

Policemen in Albania learning English; judges in Kazakhstan being trained and learning new legal skills; patrolmen monitoring the Georgian-Russian border. These are just three examples of relatively small but important developments. All of which can be traced back to the same source: the OSCE. With its field missions, this organisation has developed into an instrumental player. Instrumental, in bringing about democratic, security, legal and other reforms in regions faced with instability, ethnic conflict or both.

When you hear about activities like this or see OSCE experts working with the local population and authorities, high-profile events like OSCE's recent ministerial gathering in Porto seem far away. What takes place at such political meetings is undoubtedly important as well. They set the OSCE machinery in motion. Decisions are made there, initiatives launched, agreements reached. But the OSCE delivers its most valuable results to those policemen in Albania, those judges in Kazakhstan and those patrolmen in Georgia.

***(The case for field missions)***

That is my message today, as we look ahead to the coming year when the Netherlands will hold the OSCE Chairmanship. The OSCE field missions are what count most. They are the eyes and ears of the organisation and the most tangible proof of the international community's commitment. Through its physical presence in many unstable regions, the OSCE serves as a very important engine of change. And one, that is increasingly recognised as such by local populations.

The OSCE can directly strengthen the four pillars of any stable democracy with a strong legal order: namely, parliament and elections; the media; the judiciary; and the police. The field expertise that the OSCE can provide, the backing of its fifty-five participating states and the support that it has from the host country's authorities put it in a position where it can make a difference. In fact, its added value when compared to other institutions is that it is 'on the ground' and well placed to help with the institution-building needed for democracy and the rule of law.

***(Human trafficking)***

So we have the instrument. Now what about the issues? There are plenty of problems across our continent and far beyond. Many of which fit the OSCE's mission. Many of which are already on the OSCE's agenda: free and fair elections, the position of ethnic minorities, police monitoring and so on. From the

perspective of a country about to take on the OSCE's Chairmanship, this is a formidable agenda indeed.

But there is one issue in particular that the Netherlands wishes to place on top of the agenda as soon as it takes the helm: trafficking. Of small arms and light weapons; of drugs; but especially the trafficking of human beings. Let me explain why. First of all, human trafficking is one of the most pressing and complex human rights issues in the OSCE region. It reaches across borders to affect nearly every OSCE country. "Trafficking" includes the widespread phenomenon of trafficking in women and children for forced prostitution or other sexual exploitation. It also includes trafficking for other forms of forced labour or servitude such as sweatshops, domestic or agricultural labour, and forced or fictitious 'mail-order' marriages. The trauma and social disruption caused by these criminal activities is beyond description. Trafficking strikes at the OSCE's core activities: the promotion of human security, the rule of law, and social and political stability.

Second, the OSCE is well equipped to deal with human trafficking. Because it involves human rights abuses, poor border controls, unlawful treatment of victims, ineffective police forces and other shortcomings of weak states, it touches upon everything the OSCE field missions are all about. What's more, the OSCE and its missions deal not only with the human dimension of human trafficking but with the economic one as well: the illegal money flows resulting from it. The Netherlands will therefore push to give human trafficking higher priority on the field missions' long lists of focus areas. This could mean that missions would include more experts in this area.

A word of caution, though: we can only effectively tackle these and other issues on the OSCE's agenda if every country concerned is involved. That includes the US, and it includes the Russian Federation. In fact, only by continuing to address such relevant problems with the continued involvement of highly valued partners like the US and the Russian Federation can we truly achieve lasting solutions.

***(From concrete issues to geopolitics: how the OSCE fits in)***

I believe the relevance of the OSCE is quite clear when it comes to human trafficking. A role which is much wider is equally justified. The OSCE still occupies a unique position in comparison to other international organisations such as the Council of Europe, the United Nations or the European Union. It is a normative organisation with highly effective instruments at its disposal. Given its role in bringing about necessary reforms in many countries, it would certainly be fair to call it a facilitator, helping many states to become fully respected members of the international community. Whether through EU membership, membership of the Council of Europe or otherwise. With some simplification, one could say that

while the Council of Europe *inspires* and the European Union *motivates*, the OSCE *guides* and *stimulates*.

That does not mean that the situation is ideal. Complementarity between all these organisations can certainly be improved. There are some areas of overlap where I believe international efforts could be better streamlined. This will also receive the attention it deserves during the Dutch OSCE Chairmanship. I dare say we will be particularly well-placed for this task since over a period of roughly two years we will stand at the helm of three crucial organisations: the OSCE, the Council of Europe and the European Union.

**(Conclusion)**

Excellencies, from the realms of 'high politics' I would like to take you back to where I started: the day-to-day issues, the real-life tasks facing the OSCE today. In the Netherlands, we pride ourselves on our strong legal system, our democratic institutions and a relatively high level of human security. Yet, if you walk through the red light districts of The Hague, Amsterdam, or almost any major city in Europe you will see women and girls from such countries as Moldova, Russia, Albania. Most of them came here in the hope of a better future. Instead, they now find themselves deceived and exploited against their will. These victims of human trafficking represent the dark side of Europe. They reveal the weakness of the rule of law in many of their countries of origin. They also reveal the continuing absence of an effective response by the authorities in their countries of destination, be it the Netherlands or any other European nation. In sum, the victims of human trafficking reveal the failure of the international community to address this issue, track down the criminal networks behind it and help their victims. It is my government's intention to use its unique position in the coming year to fight with renewed vigour against this scourge that affects us all. I am counting on you and on the support of your governments to make that fight a success.