

OSCE 15th ALLIANCE AGAINST TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS CONFERENCE –

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OPENING ADDRESS BY MR. ALEKSANDAR NIKOLIĆ

**Secretary General,
Madam Special Representative,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

On behalf of the Serbian Chairmanship of the OSCE, I am delighted to open the 15th *Alliance against Trafficking in Persons* conference, which this year focuses on combating human trafficking along migration routes. I would like to thank Ambassador Jarbussynova, OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, for organising this event and for her tireless efforts to advance the OSCE's work in this field.

As we are about to mark the 40th anniversary of the signing of the Helsinki Final Act, the OSCE's founding document, its principles and commitments appear more relevant than ever. Today we are grappling with an extremely complex European security scenario, including multiple and dynamic challenges posed by a host of transnational threats. In this unstable context, OSCE participating States need to redouble their efforts to strengthen the link between peace and security in the OSCE region, facilitate political dialogue, protect fundamental rights and foster economic and social progress.

Evidently, growing instability in Europe contributes to increase the vulnerability of our citizens to human trafficking, and especially of those more directly affected by the existing confrontations. Against this background, I would like to commend the co-operative effort of the international community in Ukraine, and highlight the commitment of the Special Representative and the Special Monitoring Mission to coordinate anti-trafficking work and raise awareness about this global challenge in the context of the on-going crisis.

The *Alliance against Trafficking in Persons* offers the ideal co-ordinating framework to foster co-operation, through which various organisations can reinforce each other drawing on their particular strengths. As such, the Alliance represents a solid example of the initiatives carried out in the context of the Platform for Co-operative Security, as predicted by our Heads of States in 1999 in Istanbul.

Currently, more than 30 leading organisations – both governmental and non-governmental - are active partners of the OSCE in this domain, and most of them are represented here today. I therefore take this opportunity to thank all our partners for their dedicated efforts and for contributing to peace and stability in the OSCE region.

Today's conference indeed contributes to these global efforts by providing a key forum to discuss ways to address trafficking in human beings in the context of migration processes. This has become an increasingly urgent international issue with serious security implications for the OSCE area and neighbouring regions. The Serbian OSCE Chairmanship has consequently decided to make this issue one of its priorities, as human trafficking constitutes a grave violation of human rights and a terrible crime posing a significant threat to the security of our societies.

Excellencies,

Over the years, migration flows have evolved, growing both in terms of intensity and complexity, increasingly fuelled by instability and exploited by local and transnational organised criminal groups. In particular, so-called “mixed migration flows”, including refugees, asylum-seekers, economic **migrants** and other **migrants**, require a more flexible approach to improve the identification and protection of vulnerable people. These may include victims of trafficking, refugees, minors without companion and smuggled migrants whose lives or safety are in danger during the migration process and once they have reached their destination.

Although it is very difficult to draw a clear line between smuggling, trafficking and other irregular movements of people, we need to intensify efforts at the international and national level to address these phenomena effectively through a co-operative,

comprehensive and cross-dimensional approach. With this in mind, the OSCE is certainly well equipped to play an important role in this area.

This year the Serbian Chairmanship has promoted a set of thematic discussions on migration and human trafficking, including in the frameworks of the OSCE Security Committee and the Mediterranean Contact Group. Last month in Belgrade, we also co-organised with the OSCE Transnational Threats Department the 2015 OSCE Annual Police Experts Meeting, which focused on trafficking in human beings and irregular migration within the context of fighting organised crime in the OSCE area.

Let me very briefly share a few key findings from the Belgrade event which may be useful inputs for today’s panel discussions and, more generally, potential future OSCE initiatives in this field:

- We need further harmonisation of domestic legislation within the OSCE area to ensure effective co-operation.
- Thorough examination and investigation of potential “exploitation and trafficking elements” when handling cases of irregular migrants, refugees and asylum seekers would enhance detection of human traffickers.
- More efforts are needed to encourage financial investigations as well as seizure, freezing and confiscation of criminal assets in connection with human trafficking.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The *Alliance* conference provides a timely opportunity to advance work on human trafficking within the OSCE area, including in connection with migration-related matters. I am confident that our discussions over the next two days will contribute to this important work and facilitate further exchange of ideas and good practices on how to address this issue in a comprehensive way while respecting the human rights of the people involved.

I also hope that our discussions can lead to more effective implementation of existing OSCE commitments and possibly provide fresh ideas for the agenda of the Ministerial

Council in Belgrade later this year with regard to combating trafficking in human beings in the context of migration processes.

I wish you constructive and fruitful discussions.

Thank you for your attention.