



**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe**

**15<sup>th</sup> Alliance against Trafficking in Persons Conference**

***“People at risk: combating human trafficking along migration routes”***

**Opening Remarks by**

**Amb. Lamberto Zannier, OSCE Secretary General**

**Vienna, 6 July 2015**

Mr. State Secretary,  
Madame Special Representative,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to welcome you to the 15<sup>th</sup> conference of the OSCE *Alliance against Trafficking in Persons*, which this year focuses on combating human trafficking along migration routes. I would like to thank the OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, Ambassador Madina Jarbussynova, for bringing together such an impressive group of policymakers and experts to discuss how to enhance co-operation in addressing trafficking in human beings in the context of migration processes.

Launched by the OSCE in 2004 as a platform for advocacy and co-operation, the *Alliance* promotes a harmonized approach among participating States and *Alliance* partners to prevent and combat human trafficking. The annual *Alliance* conference is an important venue for exchanging ideas and developing synergies on cutting-edge issues among the major international players in the field, including the IOM, UNHCR, UNODC, the EU and the CIS, to name just a few of our *Alliance* partners, as well as many governmental and non-governmental organizations from OSCE participating States and their Mediterranean and Asian Partners for Co-operation. The aim is to see the eventual translation of ideas generated at

*Alliance* conferences into new anti-trafficking commitments, legislation and concrete steps to assist victims, prosecute traffickers and prevent this shameful crime.

Today's topic is particularly timely. For the first time since World War II, the number of refugees, asylum-seekers and internally displaced persons (IDPs) worldwide is almost 60 million. Political and economic instability, armed conflicts and natural disasters are forcing more and more people to leave their homes in search of a better life and a safer future. We know that human trafficking is often linked to vulnerabilities stemming from migration processes, and that trafficking networks have been systematically targeting irregular migrants in recent years. Human trafficking is a low-risk, high-profit crime that has become a multi-billion-euro globalized illegal business. Criminal groups have strong incentives to take advantage of irregular migration flows in their search for new sources of illicit profits.

Growing numbers of displaced persons and irregular migrants are flowing into or across the OSCE region, as can be seen in current south-north and east-west migration trends. According to recent figures from UNHCR, almost 4 million Syrians have fled to neighbouring countries in search of international protection, while Ukraine has well over 1.3 million IDPs, and around 900,000 Ukrainians have sought asylum across their country's borders. And more than 100,000 refugees have managed to cross the Mediterranean by boat to reach European shores in the first five months of this year – and many more keep trying, despite the very real risk that they will not survive the journey.

And as we all know, one of the most tragic aspects of these migration processes is that many women, children and men end up being trafficked for sexual and labor exploitation and forced criminality. There are even allegations that people are being trafficked into terrorism, a particularly worrying claim that the OSCE is beginning to look into. This risk becomes higher when migrants cross territories controlled or influenced by terrorist groups.

The link between human trafficking and migration presents a particularly complex transnational security challenge. It calls for a comprehensive and multi-faceted approach, bringing together a wide array of actors at the international, regional and national level to manage irregular migration flows more effectively. Such an approach must address both security concerns and the protection of the human rights of migrants, including potential and actual victims of human trafficking.

As State Secretary Nikolić has already noted, the OSCE and its Serbian Chairmanship have been increasing efforts to understand and address contemporary migration processes and their links to human trafficking. The Chairmanship has set migration high on its agenda, and I plan to hold an OSCE Security Days event in early 2016 to discuss the security aspects of this issue. Meanwhile the Secretariat is reviewing migration-related activities across the Organization to identify the OSCE's comparative advantages and to encourage greater coordination both internally and with external partners. Allow me to mention a few key areas where we are already cooperating:

- Migration in the Mediterranean region: Together with UNODC and IOM, the Office of the Special Representative and our Transnational Threats Department ran a joint project in 2013-2014 to increase our understanding of the link between irregular migration and transnational crimes affecting migrants along the Eastern Mediterranean route. We also issued a specialized publication on enhancing co-operation to prevent trafficking in human beings in the Mediterranean region in connection with a 2013 conference on this topic that we organized with our Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation. This year's annual OSCE Mediterranean Conference, which will be held in Amman in October, offers an excellent opportunity to build on this work.
- Gender and migration: Because of the specific needs and risks facing female migrants, the Offices of the Special Representative and the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities produced a guide to introduce a gender-sensitive approach in labor migration policies.
- Finally, in Ukraine, the Special Representative is working closely with the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission and the OSCE Project Co-ordinator's Office to raise awareness of the danger of human trafficking among populations at risk, including IDPs, and training OSCE monitors to identify situations in which this crime could occur.

Through these and other initiatives, the OSCE is making a useful contribution to the international community's efforts to combat human trafficking along migration routes. Thanks to its comprehensive and multidimensional approach to security, the Organization is well placed to help strike a balance between the legitimate interests of States in safeguarding

national security and borders, on one hand, and the fundamental need to protect the rights of individuals vulnerable to smuggling and trafficking, on the other.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I hope that this year's *Alliance* conference will not only help us to gain a better understanding of the interconnections between migration and human trafficking, but also enable us to identify steps we can take together to confront this challenge effectively. We must look at the root causes of irregular migration and the factors that make people on the move particularly vulnerable to being trafficked, and consider what both states and international and regional organizations can do to address them. I expect that tomorrow's side event on understanding the impact of migration on security in the OSCE area will increase synergies within the Organization as well as with external partners.

I also hope that your discussions will generate creative ideas for enhancing capacities to identify and assist vulnerable migrants, and for fostering a more coordinated framework for cooperation among countries of origin, transit and destination. Especially at a time when we face unparalleled levels of irregular migration, we must work together more closely to stamp out the terrible crime of human trafficking and help vulnerable people build a future free of poverty, violence and exploitation for themselves and their families. Today we are rising to the challenge.

Thank you, and I wish you fruitful discussions.