



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

Office of the Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings

19th *Alliance against Trafficking in Persons*
Conference

Using Technology to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings: Turning a Liability into an Asset

8 - 9 April 2019
Hofburg (Neuer Saal), Vienna

CONCEPT NOTE

FOCUS

This year's high-level conference will focus on how technology is being misused to facilitate trafficking in human beings as well as on how to harness its potential in order to combat trafficking in human beings for different exploitative purposes.

Aiming to explore technology-facilitated trafficking and national and regional responses to it, the conference will address ways in which human traffickers benefit from current technologies and discuss how anti-trafficking stakeholders can use technologies to enhance prevention of human trafficking, prosecution of the offenders and identification of and assistance to victims. Moreover, particular attention will be paid to the development of strategic approaches and legislative frameworks to enable a comprehensive response to technology-facilitated human trafficking.

THE ALLIANCE

The *Alliance against Trafficking in Persons* is an informal **platform for advocacy and co-operation** that includes international and civil society organizations. The *Alliance* was launched in 2004 to combine and co-ordinate the efforts of all its partners behind the common goal of preventing and combating human trafficking. Acting as a framework to improve synergy, the *Alliance* also supports the OSCE participating States in establishing a harmonized approach to combat this heinous crime which violates human rights and undermines the rule of law, human security and good migration governance throughout the region.

The 19th *Alliance* conference will be attended by **representatives of the 57 OSCE participating States and 11 Partners for Co-operation**, major **international organizations** and **NGOs** which are partners in the *Alliance against Trafficking in Persons*, as well as civil society, media, the private sector and academia. Active participation during the discussion sessions and via Twitter - **@osce_cthb, #cthb19** - is highly encouraged.

More information can be found at: <http://www.osce.org/event/alliance19>

BACKGROUND

With 4.2 billion people having access to the internet in 2018, information and communications technology (ICT) plays an important role in the field of trafficking in human beings (THB) and is a dominant topic among a broad range of anti-trafficking stakeholders, including governments, NGOs, private sector, academia and international organizations, including the OSCE. As stated in Ministerial Council Decision 7/13, OSCE participating States are “deeply concerned by the significant growth in all forms of THB, both transnational and internal, and reiterate[e] the particular need to take more vigorous measures to address current and emerging THB trends and patterns.”¹ According to the 2013 Addendum to the OSCE Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings, the OSCE participating States recognize the importance of identifying and taking adequate measures to “enhance their capacities in monitoring, investigating and disrupting all forms of trafficking in human beings facilitated by the ICT”, and call on relevant stakeholders from the private sector, including banking, credit card companies, ICT companies and Internet service providers to contribute to these efforts.²

One reason for the increasing attention on technology is that **technology can be of significant value to the human trafficking industry**: the misuse of technology by traffickers has strong potential to facilitate entry into the THB marketplace, to amplify the size of the THB market, to increase recruitment and exploitation frequency as well as the overall number of victims and customers, and to hide traffickers’ identity in the virtual space. A second reason is that **anti-trafficking stakeholders have shown increasing interest in technology** due to its potential to combat trafficking. Research conducted by the OSCE Office of the Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings has identified numerous promising initiatives to leverage technology in a positive way to address trafficking.

The 2019 OSCE *Alliance against Trafficking in Persons* Conference will focus on two goals: **(1) improving understanding of how technology is being misused to facilitate trafficking so that better responses can be built**, and **(2) exploring how technology can be developed, harmonized and deployed to help combat all forms of trafficking**. The *Alliance* Conference will discuss contemporary approaches and available promising practices and debate **how national legal and institutional frameworks could be improved** to allow replications of these good practices on a wider scale. It will also examine **how technology’s potential can be leveraged in order to support victims** to break the vicious cycle of human trafficking.

Prevention will be a particular focus of the conference, including how technology can be used to deter the criminal operations of traffickers in the virtual space and disrupt the human trafficking marketplace by carrying out innovative, targeted and large-scale interventions. The conference will also address the capability of ICT to assist victims or vulnerable categories of people by raising their awareness about the THB risks, empowering them to report their exploitation, seek shelter and assistance, and engage in rehabilitation programmes.

In the Ministerial Council Decisions 15/06 and 7/17 participating States highlighted the importance of co-operation with international organizations, civil society and relevant stakeholders in adopting effective measures to combat sexual exploitation as well as all forms of child trafficking.³ In this regard, a **special accent will be put on ICT developments that can be used by multiple stakeholders, including NGOs**, to address different forms of trafficking including for sexual and labour exploitation, and to become a force multiplier in the fight against THB during a time of limited resources. **The conference will emphasize opportunities across all four “Ps” of the OSCE’s response to human trafficking**: prevention, prosecution, protection and partnership.

¹ OSCE, Ministerial Council Decision “Combating Trafficking in Human Beings” (MC.DEC/7/13)

² 2013 Addendum to the OSCE Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings: One Decade Later (PC.DEC/1107/Corr.1)

³ OSCE, Ministerial Council Decision “Combating Sexual Exploitation of Children” (MC.DEC/15/06); OSCE, Ministerial Council Decision “Strengthening Efforts to Combat all Forms of Child Trafficking, Including for Sexual Exploitation, as well as other Forms of Sexual Exploitation of Children” (MC.DEC/7/17)