



**THE HOLY SEE**  
**2011 Human Dimension Implementation Meeting**  
*Working Session 17: Humanitarian issues and other commitments II.*  
*Trafficking in human beings*  
Msgr. Florian Kolffhaus  
**Thursday, October 6, 2011**

Mister Chairman,

1. The fight against human trafficking in human beings is at the heart of the OSCE's founding principle that security begins with the inherent dignity of the human person. In fact, the trade in human persons constitutes a shocking offense against human dignity and grave violation of fundamental human rights. Already the Second Vatican Council had pointed to 'slavery, prostitution, the selling of women and children, and disgraceful working conditions where people are treated as instruments of gain rather than free and responsible persons' as 'infamies' which 'poison human society, debase their perpetrators' and constitute 'a supreme dishonour to the Creator' (cfr. Pastoral Constitution of the Church *Gaudium et Spes*, 27). Such situations are an affront to fundamental values, which are shared by all cultures and peoples, values rooted in the very nature of the human person. ... Who can deny that the victims of this crime are often the poorest and most defenseless members of the human family, the 'least' of our brothers and sisters? ... The disturbing tendency to treat prostitution as a business or industry not only contributes to the trade in human beings, but is itself evidence of a growing tendency to detach freedom from the moral law and to reduce the rich mystery of human sexuality to a mere commodity.

2. Trafficking in human beings, especially of women and minors, and not just for sexual exploitation but also for labour exploitation and domestic servitude, has become a powerful global business involving many countries of origin, transit and destination. The victims of trafficking in persons are estimated at almost three million a year, a lucrative trade that generates an annual income of over thirty billion U.S. dollars. What is new is the globalization of this trade, the development of a global market which exploits the extreme poverty and vulnerability, especially of many women and minors who try to escape intolerable conditions of misery and violence.

3. With this in mind, the Holy See welcomes and appreciates the activities undertaken by the Office of Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings in all four priorities areas, namely: Prosecution and Criminal Justice Response; Protection of Victims; Prevention; and Partnership. We have especially appreciated the particular focus given to the problem of trafficking in children. The discussions at last year's Astana session of the OSCE Review

Conference showed clearly that the participating States consider this emphasis truly relevant for the work of the Office.

In the field of prevention, the Holy See would like to recall that it is of the opinion that the *demand side* of the problem of trafficking in persons needs to be squarely faced by all.

4. To counteract the scourge of trafficking in human beings with greater determination and more concrete results, a convergence of efforts is necessary: a mentality that is centered on the unique dignity of every person, a sure punishment of traffickers, fight against corruption, a correct teaching in schools of the mutual relations between man and woman, 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 is created free and in God's image and not to be treated as a slave.

5. My Delegation would also like to seize this occasion to reaffirm that the Catholic Church has long condemned the scourge of trafficking in human persons. The Church is deeply concerned for these vulnerable and innocent victims of this example of man's inhumanity to man. In fact, many religious congregations, Catholic organisations and volunteer groups, in particular those of a humanitarian nature, are strongly committed to the fight against this scourge, as well as in addressing its human, cultural, social and economic implications.

Thank you, Mister Chairman.