



## EUROPEAN UNION

### **OSCE Permanent Council No. 1436 Vienna, 27 July 2023**

#### **EU Statement on the World Day against Trafficking in Persons**

1. On the 30th of July, we mark the World Day against Trafficking in Persons. This is an opportunity to raise awareness of the situation of victims of Human Trafficking, particularly women and children, and to reiterate our commitment to work together to combat this global crime.
2. Just like last year, this day will take place against the backdrop of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. More than one year later, Russia is still waging its brutal war of aggression and the Ukrainian people continue to face incredible hardship. The European Union and its Member States continue to provide those fleeing the war with food, shelter, as well as access to health services, education and the labour market.
3. To protect people fleeing Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, the implementation of the Common Anti-Trafficking Plan to address the risks of trafficking in human beings and support potential victims continues under the lead of the EU Anti-Trafficking Coordinator, together with EU agencies and EU Member States. The Plan, which also includes awareness raising, has contributed to limiting the number of human trafficking investigations: to date Europol confirmed 19 investigations in relation to people fleeing from Ukraine.
4. The EU commends this year's theme "Reach every victim of trafficking, leave no one behind". It highlights several worrying trends across the globe, notably a decrease in the number of detected victims and a declining prosecution rate.

Moreover, criminals have rapidly adapted their modus operandi and business model to emerging phenomena, such as the online dimension of trafficking.

5. The World Day against Trafficking in Persons is also the final day of UNODC's month long "Blue Heart Campaign". This global awareness-raising initiative seeks to encourage involvement of all stakeholders, to inspire action and help prevent this heinous crime and its impact on society. The UN Voluntary Trust Fund for Victims of Trafficking in Persons provides humanitarian, legal, and financial aid to victims of trafficking in persons through established channels of assistance, including governmental, intergovernmental and non-governmental organisations across the globe.
6. The fight against trafficking in human beings is a core element of the OSCE's mandate and was discussed during this year's Alliance conference and the recent Joint Committee meeting. In the context of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, the Office of the OSCE Special Representative and Coordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings provided participating States with recommendations to mitigate the risk of human trafficking offline and online, stemming from the flow of refugees coming from Ukraine. We commend the office for the upcoming relaunch of the OSCE #BeSafe Campaign, which equips people with critical information and advice on the risks of trafficking.
7. The 2021-2025 EU Strategy to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings also promotes awareness-raising. Campaigns help to *reach potential victims* and contribute *to leave no one behind*. This is why, in connection with the EU Anti-Trafficking Day on 18 October 2023, the European Commission intends to launch an EU-wide awareness raising campaign contributing to the prevention, detection as well as the protection of potential and existing trafficking victims.
8. The EU and its Member States remain committed to working closely with international partners to prevent trafficking in human beings and address the demand that fosters exploitation, prosecute the perpetrators and protect the victims, as well as to promote adherence to international legal standards on combatting trafficking in human beings and implementation of OSCE commitments.

The Candidate Countries NORTH MACEDONIA\*, MONTENEGRO\*, SERBIA\*, ALBANIA\*, UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, and BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA\*, the Potential Candidate Country GEORGIA, as well as ANDORRA, MONACO and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

\* North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.