

ALLIANCE AGAINST TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS
“An Agenda for Prevention: Non-Discrimination and Empowerment” (11-12 October 2012)

Opening Remarks

Speaker: **Lamberto Zannier, OSCE Secretary General**

Distinguished Ministers,
Your Excellencies,
Partners of the *Alliance against Trafficking in Persons*,
Colleagues and Friends,

It is a great honour to greet all of you at the annual Conference of the *Alliance against Trafficking in Persons*. The OSCE initiative to establish and strengthen the *Alliance*, a unique platform for co-operation, has significantly contributed to the pioneering role of our Organization in this field.

I am delighted to welcome the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities and the Director of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights. Our partnership with major international players in this area and the engagement of the OSCE Institutions is stronger than ever before, and the presence of the ILO, the Council of Europe, the EU Fundamental Rights Agency and internationally recognised NGOs is another vivid manifestation of our excellent collaboration and shared values.

The important role that the OSCE plays in the anti-trafficking struggle is unquestionable. As early as 2003, in Maastricht, the OSCE participating States, endorsing the OSCE Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings, reiterated (and I quote) that “the OSCE, with its well-developed institutional capacity and proven track record, is uniquely placed to effectively assist participating States”. No doubt, this capacity has grown much more since then, due to the dedicated efforts of the Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, the ODIHR Anti-trafficking Programme, our structures in the Secretariat and Institutions, and our field presences. These bodies are doing their utmost to implement the agreed mandates and assist the participating States in the implementation of their commitments.

The phenomenon of trafficking is extremely complicated and multifaceted. Nevertheless, the very essence of the OSCE approach to human trafficking can be summarized in a few words. It is human

rights based and comprehensive. Hence, it addresses human trafficking for all forms of exploitation as a gross violation of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and, furthermore, as a serious crime that evolved into a global transnational threat undermining the rule of law and security of states and individuals.

With this broad, multidimensional approach, the OSCE goes to the core of the problem. Today we will discuss a cross-cutting factor of human trafficking - discrimination - that belongs to one of the most widely spread root causes of enslavement. Discrimination creates social vulnerabilities that can lead to victimisation and trafficking. Let me add that, when trafficking occurs in the course of the migration process, discrimination also hampers the identification and therefore the due assistance, protection and reintegration of trafficking victims in countries of destination, especially when migrants do not have a regular status. We have to admit that discrimination and exploitation of the most vulnerable and the least protected often go hand in hand in our societies. Truly, measures to eradicate human trafficking will be more successful if anti-discriminatory policies are placed higher up in the hierarchy of state priorities.

Participating States committed themselves to eliminate discrimination as a root cause of human trafficking when they approved, back in 2003, the recommendations of the OSCE Action Plan to address poverty, weak social and economic structures, lack of employment opportunities and equal opportunities in general, violence against women and children and discrimination based on sex, race and ethnicity. They decided to address all forms of discrimination and protect the most vulnerable categories, including minorities, children, migrants and internally displaced persons.

Moreover, the OSCE developed a solid political framework to address discrimination at-large, starting with the Moscow (1991) and Budapest (1994) Documents, the 2005 Ministerial Council Decision on Tolerance and Non-Discrimination, and the 2009 Ministerial Council Decision on Combating Hate Crimes.

At the global level, discrimination has been identified as a crucial component of any trafficking pattern. However, this complex link has rarely been addressed in practice. In this regard, let me commend the Special Representative and the *Alliance* partners for their current initiative, strongly supported by the Irish Chairmanship, the ODIHR and the High Commissioner on National Minorities, to encourage participating States to enhance anti-trafficking response also through targeted anti-discrimination measures.

Human trafficking affects all our countries. We cannot afford to underestimate the gravity of discrimination and exploitation as cross-cutting components of trafficking, seriously undermining the core values of the OSCE. Together we will find better ways to address modern-day slavery through empowerment, non-discrimination and human rights protection, through vigorous implementation of the OSCE commitments and obligations. Our Organization stands ready to support participating States in this noble mission.

Thank you for your attention.