



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

**Remarks of the OSCE CiO Special Representative on Gender to the 22nd
Conference of the Alliance against Trafficking in Persons**

Panel 2 – Ensuring assistance to all victims

Vienna,

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Honorable audience,

I thank you for the opportunity to participate at this discussion. Much has been invested in recent years in counteracting trafficking in human beings. It is important to note that most OSCE member states have greatly improved their legislative framework in recent years and have developed internal monitoring mechanisms to prevent trafficking in human beings, while strengthening the capacity of the institutions working with victims of trafficking in the meantime. Cross-border cooperation has been improved to combat human trafficking, with increasingly more states diversifying their data collection tools, including opening hotlines for improving the detection rate of trafficking hazards. Nonetheless, we cannot imply that traffic prevention actions as well as victim protection interventions are without fault and guarantee the safety of all people in the region.

Despite all the efforts, we still record an alarming number of trafficking cases which include victims of different ages, sexes, ethnicities, different levels of education and social status. By analysing the causes behind the large number of trafficking victims, we find that the speed of “innovation” in the methods of recruitment used by trafficking networks is significantly higher than the pace at which the governmental institutions enhance their prevention and protection mechanisms for victims. It is obvious that

traffickers' networks exploit the existing vulnerabilities in the prevention mechanisms. **To be ahead of traffickers**, we need to strengthen protection mechanisms, and diversify the approaches applied in analysing the trafficking in human being cases, while developing assistance that meets individual needs of the victims and addresses the specific vulnerabilities of each. **The linear approach when tackling trafficking risks**, and the initiation of interventions based exclusively on the profile of the "ideal victim", to which national protection systems grew accustomed to, is outdated, to say the least. **The realities of the times we live in**, show that without a specific approach, which emerges from the particularities of each specific case that includes also gender, we will not significantly increase the efficiency and impact of our interventions. **At the same time, to achieve better results** in combating trafficking in human beings, we must not only rely on the interventions of governmental agencies with a specific mandate in this area, but rather act more extensively by ensuring that implemented public policies strengthen the rule of law, encourage women and men to participate actively and decision-making processes, and empower them economically.

It is important to make this message very clear for everyone, especially for those who have the power to adjust the reality in which the population lives- **the structural barriers that further facilitate the gender-based discrimination and certain inequalities are generating a constant increase in the number of humans that are being trafficked, affecting both women and men.** To put an end to this cyclical phenomenon, we must ensure the free access for women to the job market, access to qualitative education, including vocational education and training, eliminate all legislative barriers that are facilitating the discrimination of women in

recruitment, ensure equal payment and create an environment where men and women share the household and childcare responsibilities.

When we consider possible interventions that should contribute to the reduction of human trafficking, we have to acknowledge that an important factor **that generates trafficking risks are also the persistent gender roles and stereotypes, which dictate certain behaviours of women and men.** With this in mind, it is important to ensure that information and education campaigns do not further promote gender stereotypes and deepen the image of the “ideal victim”. This will make the process of identifying and protecting victims of trafficking much more difficult. Therefore, it is essential to develop campaigns that do include gender issues that are often overlooked in the awareness process.

Developing comprehensive gender-sensitive prevention, protection and prosecution strategies is of paramount importance to **ensure that no victim is left behind,** and that **no form of trafficking is unaddressed.**

In the context of the new challenges to the security of our region, new risks to the personal security of different groups of the population arise. **For diminishing the risks of trafficking for both women and men, girls and boys,** I call on the OSCE participating countries, as well as to **all refugee-receiving countries** to follow the recommendations of the OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and ensure that national laws and regulations are updated to provide clear and comprehensive guidance regarding access of people seeking **refuge to:**

- Temporary residence permit, medical insurance and health care;

- Information in the languages they understand, including through unrestricted access to mobile communication and internet resources;
- Family preservation and reunification
- Access to labour market and gainful employment;
- Age-appropriate care and education for children;
- Access to local financial services, including providing pathways to open bank accounts in the absence of biometric form of identification and permanent address.
- Support adults and children seeking refuge to have access to obtain an identity document
- develop campaigns to inform people seeking refuge of the risks of human trafficking

Women living in conflict-affected regions are even more susceptible to the risks of human trafficking. Such circumstances can be observed in Ukraine, where the armed conflict is posing high risks to the personal security of more than 4 million Ukrainians who have been forced to leave the country, and even more millions of people that are internally displaced.

I have spoken to several non-governmental organizations in Ukraine, which even in such hostile conditions continue to monitor cases of violence and abuse against women and continue gathering evidence to document them. They warn of several cases of disappearances, abductions, and the fact that the fundamental human rights are under threat. Undoubtedly, their mission is essential and must be assisted by all of us, so we can act in accordance with the infringements recorded on the territory of Ukraine and not only.

There were several cases recorded, of undocumented travel, an border crossing with temporary documents, by women and children leaving Ukraine. There are also reports of dubious offers of help for refugee women. A crisis of this magnitude puts increasing pressure on the border police of Ukraine and countries bordering it, such as Moldova, Poland, Romania, Hungary, Slovakia and requires a combined international effort to ensure that people who have lost their homes and often their family members are not at risk to be abused by any human trafficking networks.

In this context, increased assistance to Ukraine is necessary for monitoring the current situation, so the international community can take swift actions to ensure there is no room for traffickers both inside and outside Ukraine. At the same time, increased assistance needs to be directed towards neighbouring countries, to monitor the safe movement of Ukrainian refugees and minimise trafficking risks. It is worth noting that the capabilities of non-profit organizations specializing in this field are not neglected and must be seen as an asset that can be further employed to ameliorate the current threats. Therefore, it is necessary to allocate additional funds to support their work both in Ukraine and in neighbouring countries, to provide safe solutions for the stay and transit of refugees.

Finally, I urge the OSCE participating States to cooperate effectively and to better protect people seeking refuge, from trafficking in human beings, respecting the principle of "no one is left behind" and "no one is left without protection".

Thank you for your attention.