

Speech of the
Dutch rapporteur on trafficking in human beings and sexual violence against children,
Mrs. C.E. Dettmeijer-Vermeulen

at the occasion of
“Not for Sale – Joining Forces Against Trafficking in Human Beings”
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Your Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am honoured to speak at this important conference and I want to thank the OSCE and the Council of Europe and the Swiss and Austrian Chairmanships for organising this. I have been the Dutch Rapporteur on THB for over seven years now, monitoring, collecting data and reporting on the scale and nature of trafficking in the Netherlands. And during this period I have seen a shift in our perception of the crime and consequently in our efforts to fight it. I would like to share some of my experiences with you, using the concept of framing.

For nearly fifteen years we have as a global community witnessed the impact the Palermo Protocol has had for a more widespread understanding of what trafficking in human beings consists of. Worldwide the protocol has opened people's eyes to the comprehensive phenomenon. The Council of Europe Convention and the OSCE Action Plan have continued this development. In the years after the drafting of the protocol the comprehensive interpretation of human trafficking has acquired greater definition. The EU directive set an example by listing new forms of exploitation, such as the exploitation for committing a crime and forced begging. Previously, not connected with human trafficking. This brings me to the concept framing. Framing is all about looking at existing phenomena in a different way. By using different words the phenomena are placed in a new context. Let me illustrate why framing is of essential significance when it comes to taking the right measures to fight human trafficking with three examples taken from Dutch practice, having led to reframing long existing irregular situations: shoplifting, begging and internal trafficking.

Shop-lifting is not immediately something that the average person would associate with human trafficking or exploitation. But a recent court case proved otherwise. On CCTV images in a supermarket police officers had quite clearly seen a grandfather giving his granddaughter instructions to steal groceries. Shop-lifting ... but according to the court it was primarily human trafficking; the grandfather had caused his granddaughter to steal through his position of influence. The granddaughter was not punished. Not so long ago the average judge handling petty crimes would not have recognised, or identified, this situation for what it was and would have convicted the pair jointly for theft. Nowadays Law Enforcement and the Judiciary are getting more familiar with the non punishment clause; and they have reframed the criminal acts of the perpetrator.

Begging and, another form of begging, the selling of street newspapers have long since been viewed as maybe spoiling the streetview but at the same time as harmless and far removed from human trafficking. But on closer inspection you might find that a whole world of human trafficking is concealed behind these seemingly innocent activities. Those working in the trafficking scene know this, but does the local council take this into consideration when issuing new regulations concerning begging? Do they train their people to identify certain beggars as possible victims? In other words have they reframed these situations? Here lies a responsibility for local government.

And then an example of what for years was seen as a typical Dutch phenomenon, that of loverboys'. In the Netherlands the term has become a popular way of referring to the young men who manage to coax, mostly under age, girls into prostitution by means of an emotional relationship. Victims of loverboys were, and still are, mainly associated with problems in relation to puberty, running away from home, and truancy. As a result, the tendency is for such victims to be labelled 'problem cases' as girls with problems, as if they are at fault. I dislike the word loverboys. It does not do justice to the situation. Sadly enough, this label has been copied by the UK and Germany, who are now also facing this problem, or should I say recognising it? I prefer to label it internal trafficking. About a quarter of the presumed victims in the Netherlands fall into this category. Dutch underage girls, exploited by their peers, in the Netherlands. They are victims of human trafficking, and should be perceived, framed, as such. Only then can they be offered appropriate help. This has been my recommendation for years. And with success. At last a pilot is being set up to provide specific support for under-age victims of internal trafficking. Moreover we see a growing number of countries that are in the process of recognising internal trafficking for what it is. Reframing it.

We need to move beyond the Palermo Protocol. Existing perspectives no longer suffice for a good understanding of the problems related to human trafficking. It is time to look at this phenomenon in a different way, to reframe it. This is the first step. But there is another step to take.

Training and raising awareness are key elements. The EU directive contains a wide obligation to train personnel in this field and calls upon all organisations that may come into contact with suspected victims to ensure that this is done. But this in fact entails everyone and everybody. The juvenile judge, with no training on THB issues must be able to recognise when and if a young shoplifter was made to steal. The child protection agency must learn to discern the underlying reasons for truancy. And local government has to step up and play its part in the fight against trafficking. I have elaborated on three examples of looking at long existing situations from a new perspective, with new eyes so to speak.

The American cognitive linguist George Lakoff said: *to win, one must frame the debate*. Where trafficking is concerned the key element is the same. It is all about the proper assessment of situations. Putting them in the right frame. And having done so, setting up the approach that is appropriate. Keeping in mind all three P's that define the fight against trafficking. That is the benefit to be gained from 'framing'.

And the next step, training all those concerned, will be the challenge for the years to come.