



United States Delegation

Session 2: Trafficking in Persons

As prepared for delivery by Lauran Bethell
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Ms. Moderator,

The United States appreciates the focus today on the issue of combating trafficking in human beings, and the two specific topics chosen for discussion, the implementation of commitments to combat trafficking and victim identification and protection.

The U.S. Government places a very high priority on the issue of trafficking in persons. At the 2003 United Nations General Assembly, President Bush announced a \$50 million Initiative to Combat Trafficking in Persons throughout the world. National legislation in the United States contains important provisions on protection and assistance for victims found within our borders. The U.S. Return, Reintegration, and Family Reunification Program provides assistance to victims of trafficking and their families, including return and reintegration services for victims who choose to return to their home countries and for the family reunification between victims and their immediate family members for those victims who elect to remain in the United States. On December 3, 2005, the United States signed the U.N. Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, an adjunct to the U.N. Convention Against Transnational Crime.

The United States welcomes the fact that numerous participating States have made important strides in combating trafficking in human beings, including the development of effective policing strategies by Bosnia and Herzegovina and Tajikistan. The Anti-Trafficking Strike Force in Bosnia and Herzegovina conducted four major raids in 2005 and 2006 that resulted in the rescue of 26 victims and the apprehension of at least 14 traffickers. This unit exemplifies the importance of close cooperation between prosecutors and police for executing successful raids to rescue victims and arrest traffickers. Tajikistan set up elite anti-trafficking units of specially trained police investigators throughout the country, leading to 81 trafficking investigations in 2005. Elsewhere, Romania's comprehensive report on human trafficking has already begun to serve as a roadmap for how to improve government efforts in partnership with NGOs. Lithuania has been using the classroom as a vehicle for raising awareness of the many dimensions of human trafficking. In Georgia, an inter-agency Committee on Anti-Trafficking was set up in January to identify, prioritize, and take action on anti-trafficking efforts. Among its accomplishments thus far is the Law on Trafficking which Parliament passed in April.

As many are aware, the United States issues the Trafficking in Persons Report, intended to raise global awareness, to highlight the growing efforts of the international community to combat human trafficking and to encourage foreign governments to take effective actions to counter all forms of trafficking in persons. The latest report was issued in June. A separate

report is issued annually by the U.S. Department of Justice and is exclusively focused on U.S. efforts.

In this year's TIP report, one OSCE State dropped down to Tier 3, and three others were on the Tier 2 Watch List, meaning they are in danger of moving down to Tier 3. The Tier system assesses whether States are meeting what the U.S. considers minimum standards to eliminate trafficking in human beings; a Tier 3 rating can have a negative impact on U.S. assistance to that country. We welcome the fact that several participating States have improved their counter-trafficking laws and practices, and thus have moved up or off the Watch List. Ukraine increased its law enforcement capacity, proactively investigated trafficking, and strengthened its anti-trafficking criminal code. The Slovak Republic has created a national working group on trafficking in persons, appointed a national coordinator, and adopted its first national action plan on trafficking in persons. Greece increased its capacity to protect and assist victims, improved cooperation with NGOs, and signed a child repatriation agreement with Albania. Azerbaijan passed anti-trafficking legislation, appointed a new national anti-trafficking coordinator, fully vetted the staff of an anti-trafficking police unit, nearly completed renovations of a trafficking shelter, and created two new trafficking hotlines.

The United States is concerned, however, that Uzbekistan did not make progress in the adoption of comprehensive anti-trafficking legislation that has been pending since 2003, nor did it amend its criminal code to strengthen the punishment for trafficking to ensure convicted traffickers serve time in prison. As a result, the majority of convicted traffickers received prison sentences of less than 10 years and most were granted amnesty. Further, while the government did support an anti-trafficking media campaign, it has not provided any financial assistance, in-kind assistance, or logistical support to the country's two anti-trafficking shelters. We urge the Government of Uzbekistan to make a concerted effort to address these deficiencies in law enforcement and victim assistance.

OSCE countries on the Tier 2 Watch List include: Cyprus, which continued to issue its "artiste" visas; Armenia, which had problems with victim protections and the prosecution of cases under the trafficking laws; and Russia which has yet to provide an adequate program of victim protection and assistance.

Mr. Moderator, the issue of victim identification and protection goes beyond efforts to assist victims, but also enabling law enforcement to find, arrest, and prosecute traffickers. One of the most important elements of victim identification is training, particularly for those persons most likely to come into contact with a trafficking victim, such as law enforcement personnel, health workers, and social service organizations. A Mid-Term Review on the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in America, prepared by a consortium of U.S. NGOs in anticipation of the next World Congress Against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, showed that in several cases police or rescue services personnel called to investigate an incident or suspicious venue failed to recognize - and therefore failed to rescue - trafficking victims. The lesson learned is that training does count and can lead to trafficking victims being freed sooner and their traffickers apprehended.

In the United States, the Department of Health and Human Services, which under the Trafficking Victims Protection Act is designated to provide assistance to eligible trafficking victims, created the Rescue and Restore Victims of Trafficking campaign to help identify and assist victims in America. The goal is to educate those most likely to encounter trafficking victims and to build ties to NGOs and service providers who can assist victims. The program provides information and also runs a national referral hotline that will connect victims with NGOs in their local area and also help intermediaries determine if they have encountered a trafficking victim.

The program has developed training tools, fact sheets, educational brochures and posters, pocket assessment cards for law enforcement and health care workers, and a hotline card, all of which are available online and in a variety of languages at www.acf.hhs.gov/trafficking. Materials can also be ordered online. We will be happy to assist countries interested in obtaining more information.

This is an area where the OSCE could have a role to play, either by gathering training and other materials which could be used as a basis for similar programs in other OSCE States, or by providing training directly.