



Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting on
Combating Sexual Exploitation of Children

Vienna, 18-19 October 2007

Closing Remarks by
Ambassador Christian Strohal,
Director of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and
Human Rights

Check against delivery!

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is safe to say that we had a very productive meeting. There is no need for me to elaborate on the key issues that have been so well summarized by the moderators of the three working sessions on vulnerability, legislation and good practices. Let me just highlight three points which are key from the perspective of my Office:

I.

The protection of those who are vulnerable to exploitation must be central to all efforts. They must not be punished or criminalized. Child-friendly mechanisms to facilitate childrens' reporting of abuse should be developed and maintained; children have to know about them, too. They should include the possibility to report to peers or youth groups. Such reporting

should be confidential and must, first and foremost, lead to assistance provision. Where a child fears expulsion or marginalization, or is threatened with punishment for being involved in prostitution, this also creates obstacles to reporting and assistance. In short, to combat sexual exploitation of children governments must take a comprehensive approach which does not only focus on criminal justice.

II.

Durable solutions must be developed in the best interests of the child which satisfy their concrete needs, including educational and work opportunities - whether this be in the country of destination (if they are migrant children) or in their home country. Also countries of destination need to diversify their responses to the exploitation of migrant children and not just resort to repatriation which sometimes fosters further abuse of these children.

III.

With regard to the needs of specific groups which are at risk, relevant legislation and concrete implementation measures have been identified, especially in the field of education, health, social protection and migration. For those particularly vulnerable and marginalized groups, efforts must not stop at the individual child, but include action to integrate and empower their families and communities. A need for parental education and intervention programmes has also been highlighted.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thanks to the initiative of Belgium, France and the United States, we were able to meet here for one and a half days and discuss how to end commercial sexual exploitation of children. Because it is criminal, and revolting and unacceptable that children are treated this way; and because, more generally, their exploitation puts our societies at risk. This makes their sexual exploitation an issue for the OSCE as a regional security organization. We know

what leads to the sexual exploitation of children, we know who are the most vulnerable; and we know that we can deploy effective responses to eliminate this phenomenon. This is, in other words, about the follow-up work ahead of us.

Key recommendations to this end have also included the need for States to develop action plans with the contribution of young people and with specific provisions on protection measure of children. States should create focal points on exploitation of children to coordinate regional and local action, as proposed by our keynote speaker, Mme. Lizin, but also to facilitate international cooperation.

I am grateful to our speakers and moderators, and to all of you for your very active participation, and in particular for the concrete experiences, challenges and good practices on the policy and working level you shared with us. Such an active interaction between civil society and governmental stakeholders is

something we consider a “good practice”, and which we at the ODIHR are ready to support and develop further.

I should like to thank the Spanish Chairmanship for their support in the preparation of this meeting; special thanks go also to the child rights experts and practitioners from civil society, governments and international organizations without whose contribution this event would not have been possible. Words of thanks, finally, for the ODIHR team – especially Shivaun, Astrid and Alina – who have not only worked hard to prepare this meeting, but who will continue to support its follow-up.

Thanks you and have a safe trip home.