

25 September 2018

**Statement by the delegation of Georgia
At OSCE Human dimension Implementation Meeting
Working session 14: Humanitarian and other commitments,
including combating in human beings, refugees and
displaced persons, persons at risk of displacement
Warsaw, September 19, 2018**

Mr. Moderator,

Georgia aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union, yet I wish to make few national remarks.

We welcome the focus of today's session on forced displacement that remains one of the acute challenges across the globe, reaching a record - 65.6 million people displaced by conflict, violence, persecution and natural calamities.

Among those 65 million are up to 400 000 forcibly displaced from Georgia's Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions.

These people had to flee their homes following several waves of ethnic cleansing starting from early 90's. Grave human rights violations and continued ethnic discrimination perpetrated by occupation regimes in those regions prevent them from returning to their houses.

The Government of Georgia spares no effort to promote the socio-economic integration and improve the living conditions of IDPs, however, their core right – right to return in safety and dignity, remains unfulfilled.

Increasing number of internal displacement in the OSCE area is a source of great concern that should be duly addressed in the OSCE agenda. The OSCE's unique assets and specific comparative advantages make it a fitting platform for this purpose.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today, during the lunch break, from 1:30-2:30 pm, Georgia will be hosting a side event in this plenary hall, where you'll have a possibility to gain more insight on the state of human rights situation of conflict affected population in Georgia, including the IDPs.

Mr. Moderator,

I'd also like to take this opportunity and briefly touch upon another important topic of today's session and inform you on the steps undertaken by GoG to combat trafficking in human beings.

According to the 2016, 2017 and 2018 US TIP Reports, Georgia is in Tier 1 and shares leading position among other western countries, including the EU member states. It should be underlined that for the first time during the last couple of years the latest US TIP Report has acknowledged the Georgian Anti-Trafficking National Referral Mechanism and the governmental efforts, including the grants issued by the Ministry of Justice, for identification and resocialization of children in street situations as one of the best models.

Let me express our sincere appreciation to OSCE/ODIHR for choosing the Georgian Anti-Trafficking National Referral Mechanism as one of the successful examples and reflecting it in the revised Practical Handbook on National Referral Mechanisms of the OSCE/ODIHR.

The multifaceted anti-THB policy of the Government of Georgia centers on the so called 4 Ps: Prevention, Protection, Prosecution and Partnership.

In terms of prevention, the GoG unleashed active information campaign, aiming at raising public awareness on human trafficking. For this purpose, within the framework of the Common Information Strategy, which is quite unique in our region, meetings with diversified target groups on a regular basis are held throughout the country; information materials in all main languages of minority population groups are largely disseminated in urban, as well as in rural areas, state borders and Georgia's consular units abroad; moreover, THB-related aspects are integrated in curriculum of secondary schools and higher education institutions.

As for protection, in order to bring under state protection as many THB victims as possible, the Georgian law differentiates between status of victim of trafficking and status of statutory victim of trafficking. As a result, even if alleged victims resist to cooperate with law enforcers, still the state embraces these individuals and offers them wide range of state services. Notably, the full package of state-run services, including one-off compensation, shelter, crisis centers, legal and medical assistance, for the victims for the victims are provided by the Ministry of Healthcare.

In terms of prosecution, the GoG focuses on proactive identification and investigation of TIP cases. In this regard 4 mobile groups and Task Force under the Ministry of Interior and Prosecutor's Office regularly check places of risk and interview employees there. Moreover, the Department of Labor Inspectorate Department continues to conduct proactive and regular inspections of institutions and organizations to identify the cases of forced labor

and labor exploitation. As a result, the number of investigations, prosecutions and convictions is increasing annually, which reveals the increased efforts of Georgian law enforcements to identify the victims and prosecute the perpetrators.

In order to reinforce the identification related crimes to prevent the THB cases the Criminal Code and the Criminal Procedure Code of Georgia were amended and pimping was criminalized in June, 2018.

In terms of partnership the GoG prioritizes enhancement of cooperation with non-governmental sector. NGOs and international organizations are actively involved in the working process of Interagency Council, which is chaired by the Minister of Justice and remains to be the main policy-shaper body on human trafficking issues. In addition, the GoG also pays particular attention to expanding international cooperation in combating cross-border trafficking.

And finally, Georgia is particularly concerned with children in street situations. Some important initiatives have already been implemented for their protection. Georgia is committed to continue work for developing and bringing into effect initiatives aimed at counteracting exploitation of children in the street.

In conclusion, I have to reiterate that effective fight against THB remains a top priority of the Government of Georgia both by means of improving methods of prevention and prosecution and enhancing protection of victims.

Thank you.