

Working Session 14: Humanitarian issues and other commitments, including combating trafficking in human beings, refugees, and displaced persons, persons at risk of displacement

Rapporteur: *Mr. Dustin DeGrande, Political Officer from the U.S. Mission to the OSCE in Vienna*

No. of statements: 50

Delegations: 15

Civil society: 33

OSCE institutions: 1

International organizations: 1

Media: 0

Rights of reply: 10

This session examined the fight against trafficking in human beings, especially within vulnerable populations like refugees and displaced persons, as well as humanitarian considerations of persons at risk of displacement.

Moderator Valiant Richey, the OSCE Acting Coordinator for Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings explained that the session would prioritize identifying vulnerabilities from migration. He highlighted the need for better procedures for identifying trafficking victims, applying those procedures consistently, and encouraging bilateral and multilateral cooperation. He encouraged participants to make good use of guidelines being developed by ODIHR and its partners.

UNHCR Special Envoy for the Central Mediterranean Situation Vincent Cochetel reported on human trafficking trends along the Mediterranean routes, warned of a lack of progress in European states since the April 2018 trafficking in persons conference in Vienna, and offered recommendations for what participants could do from now. He noted a growth in trafficking in and around Libya due to the commoditization of migrant smuggling and need to monetize their

investments or risk losing money. Special Envoy Cochetel called for restrictions on importing unsafe boats, which, he reported, have killed more people than Libya's civil war in 2012. He warned of gaps in effective care networks and lack of information for victims in Europe.

Survivors of Prostitution-Abuse Calling for Enlightenment (SPACE) International Founder Rachel Moran argued that every participating State has the responsibility to eradicate prostitution. She explained that trafficking is prevalent in prostitution, often because sex workers begin working as minors, falling under the Palermo Protocol definition of trafficking.

Interventions from participating States and civil society organizations debated the root causes and responsibility for displacement and displaced persons, and whether prostitution should be criminalized or sex workers protected. They noted that women and children were at particular risk. Several interventions voiced support for ODIHR's National Referral Mechanism Handbook. A majority of participating States described their cooperation on a comprehensive law enforcement and protection network, with a special focus on human trafficking and a humanitarian approach. Many urged a focus on the "four P's": prevention, prosecution, protection, and partnerships. They noted that organized crime, smuggling, and trafficking often overlap, with the same perpetrators and requiring a combined response. They urged stakeholders to disrupt the business model while providing assistance to victims. Many delegations noted the leading roles played by UNHCR and IOM in the issues of displaced persons, refugees, and trafficking in human beings, with the OSCE playing a complementary role. Some participating States expressed appreciation for the work being done by the OSCE Office of the Special Representative and Coordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings. There was general agreement that a holistic, cross-border approach is required, requiring capacity building within states and cooperation between them.

Recommendations made by participants during this session include (non-exhaustive list):

Recommendations to the OSCE participating States:

- Provide additional assistance to the criminal information cell in Sofia and/or the regional center in Khartoum.
- Make information available to potential trafficking victims, regardless of their status.
- Investigate the flow of financial transactions to identify perpetrators
- Ignore calls from some civil society organizations to decriminalize prostitution.

- Encourage participating States to create their own watchlists of traffickers and share these with others.
- Encourage the drafting and implementation of legislation to protect trafficking victims and enable the prosecution of traffickers.
- Support ODIHR's project to update the National Referral Mechanism Handbook.
- Ensure the rights of internally-displaced persons for a safe voluntary return.
- Join the UN Call to Action.
- Implement existing OSCE commitments, and use the OSCE as a platform for sharing best practices.
- Train volunteers and officials in recognizing signs of trafficking.
- Address the underlying causes of migration and trafficking.
- Cooperate internationally across law enforcement bodies.
- Resist extradition if there is a risk of harassment or torture upon their return.
- Consider the needs of disabled persons in responding to migrants.

Recommendations to the OSCE:

- Continue to support the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights' (UNHCR), International Organization for Migration's (IOM), and the International Labor Organization's (ILO) leading role in addressing displaced persons, refugees, migrants, and trafficking in human beings, with OSCE playing a complementary role.
- Develop with participating States and partners transnational mechanism to combat trafficking in human beings.
- Support the human rights of vulnerable groups.
- Focus efforts within the framework of the Four P's.
- Continue to coordinate with civil society.
- Conduct a review of OSCE commitments, followed by an ODIHR report.