



HOLY SEE
Address of Monsignor Anthony R. Frontiero
Official of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace

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Humanitarian Issues and Other Commitments I: Trafficking in Human Beings
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Madam Moderator,

A listing of concrete recommendations by the Holy See will be submitted to the Secretariat along with the text of my remarks. The OSCE Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings is a hopeful manifestation of the strong commitment on the part of the participating States to put an end to the scourge of trafficking in persons, which has appropriately been called the new form of slavery. There have been many concrete initiatives taken to stem this horrific activity whereby persons, mostly women and children, are either lured away from their homes and families by false promises of a better future, or simply abducted from their homes, only to be caught up in a cycle of sexual abuse, violence, and/or forced labor, most often accompanied by unspeakable living conditions and the threat of bodily harm, torture, and death on a daily basis. Such initiatives include education and awareness campaigns, legislation aimed prosecuting traffickers, and the implementation of more effective mechanisms for international cooperation in fighting this tragic human problem. The Delegation of the Holy See commends these valiant efforts, both those of governments as well as those of NGOs, including the many religious organizations, that have made it a priority to offer safe havens, healing centers and places of care for the victims of trafficking.

Each year, this distinguished body of government representatives and non-governmental organizations gathers here in Warsaw to discuss this pressing issue. Each year we acknowledge the progress that has been made in the fight and lament the fact that still so much more must be done. In this regard, the Holy See would like to draw attention to the desperate need for the human family to face squarely the *demand side* of the problem of trafficking in persons. In his recent Encyclical Letter, *Caritas in Veritate*, Pope Benedict XVI wrote that: “The Church forcefully maintains [this] link between life ethics and social ethics, fully aware that ‘a society lacks solid foundations when, on the one hand, it asserts values such as the dignity of the person, justice and peace, but then, on the other hand, radically acts to the contrary by allowing or tolerating a variety of ways in which human life is de-valued and violated, especially where it is weak or marginalized.’”¹

An illustration of the significance of this problem is offered by the phenomenon of international tourism, which can be a major factor in economic development and cultural growth,

¹ Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, no. 15.

but can also become an occasion for exploitation and moral degradation. In many cases, alongside otherwise legitimate economic opportunities, including education, there are immoral or even perverted forms of conduct, as in the case of so-called sex tourism, to which many human beings are sacrificed even at a tender age. It is sad to note that this activity often takes place with the support of local governments, with silence from those in the tourists' countries of origin, and with the complicity of tour operators.²

The "industry" of buying and selling people, mostly women and children, as "things" to be used and tossed aside in the interest of greed, selfish pleasures, or cheap labor is a dark world. The OSCE Action Plan helps to scatter this darkness so that individuals and nations may rise above it. Yet, there is a need for a more effective network of political mechanisms, economic institutions, and international cooperation, all of which must be rooted in one of the most striking aspects of any discussion of human rights: respect for life. Only an authentic effort at placing respect for life and the splendor of human dignity at the center of our concerns will prompt us to seek what is right and just, and to step outside the restricted sphere of our own self-interest and act for the good of others.³

Thank you, Madam Moderator.

² Cfr. *ibid.*, no. 61.

³ Cfr. Benedict XVI, *Address at Regensburg* (September 2006).