

**CONCLUDING STATEMENT BY THE OSCE SPECIAL
REPRESENTATIVE
AND CO-ORDINATOR
FOR COMBATING TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS
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AT THE VILNIUS CONFERENCE
"PREVENTING TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS: CHALLENGES
AND SOLUTIONS"**

Vilnius, 26 October 2007

Dear colleagues,

We have come to the last, concluding session of our conference, the first event organized by the Lithuanian government, OSCE and UNODC together under the UN Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking. This has really been a good example of co-operation. I wish to keep the same level of openness and readiness and to do our utmost in co-operation between the OSCE participating States and international organizations in our common fight against this crime. Thank you all for your highly professional presentations and your interest to go deeper into the discussions.

My main impression from the discussions we had, and I hope you are sharing this view, is that we do have a consensus regarding the roles of all social partners, be it the media, educational institutions, business community, trade unions, labour inspectors, legislators, and many others, in addition to "traditional" stakeholders, in preventing the criminals to commit evil against most vulnerable and less protected women, men and children.

We must not overestimate their impact on various aspects of prevention. For example, media as the "fourth power" is and will remain as a driving force to turn the public opinion to the needs and pleas of the victims, actual and

potential,. It is the media to motivate authorities to put anti-trafficking higher in its' political agendas. It is the media to make our parliamentarians accountable to the people for adequate legislation. Whether striving for short-term, immediate goals or a long-term perspective in promoting human rights, non-discrimination, human security and equal opportunities for all.

Our discussion on anti-trafficking measures to decrease the demand factor also led to a bunch of fruitful ideas to develop them further and translate into practice. Let me highlight the concept of new generation of preventive strategies which was proposed by the Anti-Slavery International, the concept based on a thorough research and assessment of "traditional" preventive efforts. We have to admit that there is a broad field for improvement in this area for all – state officials and civil society. What is needed is to have in mind all forms of trafficking and exploitation resulting from it, all categories of victims and specificities of their vulnerability in order to meet this challenge and to reach sustainable results.

I would again reiterate the role of employers and significance of cooperation between the state and the private sector in ensuring labour standards and eliminating grounds for any form of exploitation. Support to enterprises which introduce and follow Codes of Conduct in their employment policies would really matter. When consumers ask questions about child labour, or ethical and social codes of companies which produce abroad, we give a clear signal to these companies that it is significant to the success of their brand the labour force they use. The market of demand is by all rational means the easiest to change and decrease when it comes to the sex business. To me, it is also unethical to make the victim the one responsible for becoming a victim when it is the person with the least options, the least chances. But it is essential to remember that governments can do much more in creating a less easy environment for

exploitation of people, both for sexual and labour exploitation. I would like to draw your attention to such preventive measures as quitting the link between the visa requirements and work permits to a single employer. The current practice creates grounds for exploitation with no chance to escape from slavery-like situations.

I do recognize that these are difficult issues to address. Changing human behaviour is difficult but necessary. Nonetheless, we must acknowledge the fact that our fast changing world has produced a greater degree of human exploitation than ever seen before. According to Dr. Kevin Bales, one of the primary researchers on human trafficking today, there are more men, women and children held in slave-like conditions in our time than during the height of the transatlantic slave trade.

Before saying "good-bye" let me thank the host country and dedicated staff of the Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Justice and Foreign Affairs for their support, and the interpreters who helped us to understand better each other's concerns and wishes. We worked for two days in a team spirit and we will bring this spirit back home. The proceedings of this conference and its recommendations will be published at our website for all of you to use them in your future endeavours.