



**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
Office of the Special Representative and Co-ordinator for
Combating Trafficking in Human Beings**

Highlights of the
17th *ALLIANCE AGAINST TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS* Conference

“Trafficking in Children and the Best Interests of the Child”



Vienna, Hofburg

3-4 April 2017

Introduction

The 17th *Alliance against Trafficking in Persons* conference, [Trafficking in Children and the Best Interests of the Child](#), provided an interactive platform for expert discussion on how to enhance the coherence of international efforts and further promote adequate approaches to respond to child trafficking in the OSCE region in the best interests of the child, and in line with relevant OSCE commitments, including the 2005 Addendum to the OSCE Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings: Addressing the special needs of child victims of trafficking for protection and assistance, (PC.DEC/685) and the 2013 Addendum to the OSCE Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings: One Decade Later (PC.DEC/1107/Corr.1), as well as obligations stemming from relevant United Nations and Council of Europe instruments. Throughout the conference, good practices, case studies and gaps to be addressed were highlighted with the aim of developing integrated recommendations to effectively respond to child trafficking in a rights-based and child-friendly manner. Within the current security context, a special emphasis was placed on children on the move, including unaccompanied minors, missing and internally displaced children.

To strengthen measures to prevent child trafficking, protect children's rights and efficiently prosecute perpetrators, conference topics included threats facing children in crisis situations, factors heightening child vulnerability, the adequacy of existing child protection systems, as well as policies and measures which should foster the best interests of the child.

Representing all 57 OSCE participating States and 11 Partners for Co-operation, this high-level event brought together a record number of 381 participants from relevant international and regional organizations, NGOs, as well as from academia, think-tanks, the media, experts, legal practitioners and government representatives, in particular national co-ordinators on trafficking in human beings or equivalent mechanisms. The proceedings were live-streamed and watched by hundreds of viewers from across the globe, and all presentations are available in the Resources section of the conference webpage.

Four thematic sessions were held on the margins of the *Alliance* conference:

1. **Trafficked for terrorism – children and youth in peril**, co-organized with the Executive Committee of the CIS.
2. **Prevention of early forced marriages among vulnerable groups**, co-organized with the Permanent Representation of France to the OSCE.
3. **Legal framework and practical measures for conducting child interviews in human trafficking investigations: challenges, best practices and lessons learned**, co-organized with the OSCE's Transnational Threats Department (TNTD) / Strategic Police Matters Unit (SPMU).
4. **The forthcoming review of the UN Global Action Plan in light of new human trafficking trends**, co-organized with the Permanent Delegation of the Republic of Belarus to the OSCE.

The panellists of the thematic sessions, together with the panel rapporteurs, featured as speakers in the concluding panel where they shared a set of concrete recommendations stemming from the conference discussions.

Opening session

Michael Linhart, Deputy Minister for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs, Austrian OSCE Chairmanship, **Lamberto Zannier**, Secretary General of the OSCE, **Fr. Michael Czerny**, Under-Secretary at the Migrants and Refugees Section, Holy See, and the OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, **Madina Jarbussynova**, welcomed the 2017 *Alliance* conference participants.

The high-level speakers unanimously acknowledged the significance of this year's *Alliance* conference topic. Indeed, given the magnitude of the challenges, a special emphasis was placed on the OSCE's determination to continue strengthening the effectiveness of child protection mechanisms in crisis situations and facilitate the inclusion of child-sensitive anti-trafficking responses into all humanitarian actions in a more systematic way. Governments were called upon to revisit their immigration policies and develop up-to-date guidelines for officials to prevent the return of trafficking victims to dangerous and often life-threatening situations. This year's concrete plan of actions to address human trafficking, in line with the OSCE Austrian Chairmanship priorities, was also presented to the audience.

The keynote address of the opening session was delivered by **Fr. Michael Czerny** and began with a message from **Pope Francis** in which the need to raise public awareness and better coordinate governmental, legal, enforcement and social efforts to rescue millions of children, as well as adults, was prominently highlighted. The importance of maintaining equal focus across the "four pillars" of *prevention, protection, prosecution* and *partnership* was underlined as being crucial to the effective, co-ordinated and comprehensive response to trafficking in human beings.

Panel 1: Human Trafficking Threats for Children in Crisis

This panel was moderated by **Susanne Riegler**, ORF journalist and film-maker, who worked together with Rapporteur **Anh Nguyen**, Head of Migrant Assistance Division, IOM. **Kevin Hyland**, Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner, UK, **Federica Toscano**, Project Officer, Missing Children Europe, and **Sarah Elliott**, Associate Legal Specialist - Asylum and Migration, UNHCR, featured as panel speakers.

The speakers emphasized that crises in and beyond the OSCE region dramatically heighten vulnerability to human trafficking, with numerous children representing soft targets for criminal networks and individual traffickers. Displaced, forced on the move, separated from their families, these children are at risk of falling victim to labour and sexual exploitation, forced marriages, trafficking for organ removal, begging and being coerced into criminal activities. An alarming number simply go missing. In this complex, insecure and volatile

environment, gaining children's trust, understanding and ensuring their best interests and providing them with access to justice and remedies are of paramount importance.

The panellists agreed upon the following recommendations:

- *Child protection systems must be strengthened and adjusted to large influxes or crisis contexts in the OSCE region and must be harmonized and streamlined;*
- *A more efficient process, with regular provision of information, will be crucial in building children's confidence in the system. This entails: proactive non-discriminatory identification, regular training for frontline responders and the need for effective debriefing and information sharing;*
- *Immediate protection means for children upon reaching Europe should be improved. Higher prioritisation of disruption of traffickers should be made and source and transit countries should be consulted so as to develop sustainable solutions;*
- *NRMs or well-coordinated referral systems should ensure that assistance to trafficked victims, child protection and asylum seeking are managed under one appointed legal guardian;*
- *Trafficked migrant children, who are not eligible for refugee status, should be given temporary residency delinked from their participation in criminal proceedings, and considered for permanent residence on humanitarian or compassionate grounds;*
- *Centralised systems collecting all information related to an unaccompanied child should be developed, with relevant safeguards put in place on how this information can be stored and accessed appropriately;*
- *The key role played by fast track reporting of potential cases of child trafficking should be highlighted as part of the overall need to improve the exchange of information and analysis of cases on a cross-border/international level;*
- *The crucial role of initial reception for building trust and framing children's future interactions with authorities should be emphasised with authorities;*
- *Provision of suitable child-friendly areas at reception points should be ensured;*
- *Adequate deployments of cultural mediators play a vital role in building trusting relationships, thus their presence during key stages of interaction with children should be facilitated;*
- *In source countries, more focus should be placed on criminal justice capacity building, community mobilisation activity to engage cultural enablers, and sustainable development and education opportunities;*
- *A child, present or missing, is a child – every case deserves attention and should be addressed individually, with children consulted in decisions taken.*

Panel 2: Towards effective child protection systems to prevent and combat human trafficking

Panel 2 was moderated by **Thomas Wissing**, Head of the Advocacy and Partnership Unit, ILO, who was assisted by Rapporteur, **Ina Verzivolli**, Head of State Agency for the Protection of Children's Rights, Albania. The Panel included **Marilena Viviani**, Director,

Geneva Liaison Office, UNICEF, **Bragi Guðbrandsson**, Director General, Government Agency for Child Protection, Iceland, **Malgorzata Makarska**, Judge, Vice-President of Biala Podlaska District Court, Poland, **Nicola Oberzaucher**, Director Programme, SOS Children's Villages International Office Region CEE/CIS, and **Helmut Sax**, Member of the Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, Council of Europe.

The panel looked at successful practices of prevention of child trafficking and identification and assistance to trafficked children. The speakers provided examples of multi-disciplinary and interagency rights-based responses which foster co-operation and seek to optimize the quality of prosecution and the treatment of the child; including the BARNAHUS model; approaches to alternative care; prevention of separation of children from their families and emergency responses, as well as instances of successful investigation and prosecution of child trafficking cases.

The panellists highlighted a number of underlying factors increasing vulnerability, including birth registration, poverty and lack of employment opportunities, access to education, lack of parental care and "influence of the street" and crisis situations. They stressed that the failures of child protection systems in countries of origin are the push factors which force children to migrate and increases the risk of them falling victim to being trafficked. However, if in place, effective and functional child protection systems in countries of transit and destination can significantly reduce this risk and create favourable conditions for identifying and assisting child victims of trafficking.

Concrete findings of the panel include:

- *Child trafficking and child protection should not and cannot be considered separately – child trafficking will not be adequately addressed without functional and effective protection systems in place;*
- *Integrated and effective child protection systems should be established, strengthened and continuously funded, both at the national level through developing national child protection strategies and internationally to ensure sustainable and effective co-operation between countries of origin, transit and destination;*
- *Child protection systems should always be based on child-friendly and trust-building approaches and procedures, entail child participation and promote individual case management. They must also provide safe alternative care and avoid re-traumatization, for instance, brought about by multiple interviews;*
- *Asylum and migration regimes should be integrated into child protection systems;*
- *Child protection systems should adopt a multi-agency and multidisciplinary approach at all levels (local and central, national and international), with close collaboration and co-operation between social services, law enforcement, health and education sectors and judicial authorities;*
- *The presence of safeguards for unaccompanied minors, including guardianship mechanisms, age assessment and family tracing, should be ensured;*
- *Cross-border co-operation in child protection should be institutionalized and based on uniform standards, procedures and approaches;*

- *Prevention efforts should focus on addressing the factors that increase children's vulnerability through family strengthening and sustainable youth programmes.*

Thematic sessions

The recommendations elaborated during the four thematic sessions complemented those shared during the main conference programme.

Trafficked for terrorism – children and youth in peril

Moderated by **Vera Gracheva**, Deputy Chair, Foundation against Digital Threats, Modern Slavery, Kidnappings and Exploitation, Russian Federation, this thematic session was co-organized by the CIS Executive Committee and the Office of the Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings (OSR/CTHB). Session speakers included **Parviz Mullodjanov**, Independent Researcher, Tajikistan, **Viktor Mikhaylov**, Director, Centre for Regional Threats Studies, Uzbekistan, and **Nurlan Kurmanov**, Deputy Director, Department for Co-operation on Issues of Security and Addressing New Challenges and Threats, CIS Executive Committee.

Having focused on this rather new aspect of human trafficking and its link with terrorist activities, the session agreed on the relevance of this approach in connecting these two phenomena due to the presence of all three elements of the international definition of human trafficking. The audience stressed the extremely severe and cruel treatment of recruits and the appearance of a new generation of children and youth who have known no life other than one of violence and killing. All speakers dwelled on what is often a sophisticated system of recruitment, along with a number of worrying trends, including steadily increasing numbers of recruits, growing numbers of girls and young women who join terrorist organizations to serve as “wives”, the gradually decreasing age of recruits, the appearance of mixed forms of exploitation within terrorist organizations (sexual and labour), as well as the engagement of young high school graduates, both men and women.

Given the complexity of trafficking for terrorism and its deep social, economic and cultural roots which cannot be easily eradicated in the short-time, participants agreed upon the following recommendations:

- *The leading role in combating human trafficking for terrorism belongs to the participating States and their executive bodies;*
- *National legislation needs to be constantly revised and, if necessary, improved to ensure its adequacy to counter this new transnational threat;*
- *A new evidence-based approach to assess the scope of trafficking for terrorism should be elaborated to provide participating States with more information and expertise, map the situation and identify prevailing tendencies and factors;*
- *Social and economic policies should prioritise social justice as a strategic goal; countering corruption and eradicating labour exploitation (forced labour and all other forms of modern slavery) should constitute an integral part of such policies;*

- *Youth policies have to be revisited, revised and redesigned to meet contemporary challenges;*
- *Social partnerships, as well as social projects, should be further developed and specifically target vulnerable groups;*
- *Collaboration with religious organizations and communities should not be underestimated;*
- *Effectiveness of financial investigations to track and disrupt financial flows and criminal profits gained from human trafficking, including trafficking for terrorism, should be enhanced;*
- *International co-operation remains a valid instrument for capacity building, exchange of data, sharing best practices and co-operation in the field, especially in cases of transnational crime;*
- *Prevention through awareness raising should be enhanced with an emphasis placed on the extensive use of current information technologies and social media.*

Prevention of early forced marriages among vulnerable groups

This thematic session was co-organized by the Permanent Representation of France to the OSCE and the OSR/CTHB, and opened by Ambassador **Veronique Roger-Lacan**, Permanent Representative of France to the OSCE and Ambassador **Slavica Milacic**, Permanent Representative of Montenegro to the OSCE. The panel was moderated by **Laurent Goncalves**, Co-ordinator, Regional Unit against Organized Crime in South East Europe, France and included, **Lia Magnaguagno**, Project Manager, Head of the Democratization Programme, OSCE Mission to Montenegro and **Sonja Perisic Bigovic**, Advisor, Government office and National Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, Republic of Montenegro.

Against the emerging trend of early (forced) marriages that has an increasing adverse effect on young people in and outside the OSCE region, panelists discussed the results of the French-funded ExB project “Prevention of early (forced) marriages among vulnerable groups” implemented by the OSCE Mission to Montenegro between June 2015 and June 2017. The project aimed at strengthening the capacities of relevant local authorities and civil society dealing with this issue and was designed to foster a comprehensive approach in the prevention of early (forced) marriages. It also increased access to information and led to better protection of the communities that are most affected by the phenomenon by placing a particular focus on the issues of domestic violence, economic empowerment, health protection of women from vulnerable groups and the potential correlation with human trafficking. To this end, the Mission’s team along with the experts organized more than 50 interviews and focus groups involving some 150 participants.

The main conclusions of this thematic session include:

- *Adopting relevant legislations and further streamlining them to ensure a more coherent sanctioning and preventative policy;*

- *Implementing existing legislation more effectively and strengthening institutional capacities;*
- *Adopting a comprehensive approach which is inclusive, co-ordinated and flexible when dealing with target groups, relevant institutions and civil society;*
- *Gaining a full and comprehensive picture of the overall situation in the municipalities involved e.g. through a mapping exercise;*
- *Further raising awareness within society while strengthening available mechanisms, especially at the local level, as well as fostering dialogue and communication among communities and families;*
- *Raising public awareness on vulnerability factors that can lead to sexual exploitation and domestic servitude;*
- *Recognizing the role of youth and their ability to participate in prevention activities and react to this phenomenon;*
- *Strengthening co-ordination and co-operation between the local, national and regional level;*
- *Fostering regional co-operation by, for example, ensuring more exchange of experience and better co-ordination of activities, as well as streamlining international support programmes. Bilateral steps are not sufficient, especially for law enforcement and the judiciary.*

Legal framework and practical measures for conducting child interviews in human trafficking investigations: challenges, best practices and lessons learned

This thematic session was organized by OSCE Transnational Threats Department, Strategic Police Matters Unit (TNTD/SPMU), in co-ordination with the OSR/CTHB. It was moderated by Mr. **Gerald Neuhaus**, Police Affairs Officer, Adviser on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, TNTD/SPMU, and saw **Guy Vinet**, Head of the Strategic Police Matters Unit, OSCE, acting as rapporteur. The panel included Mr. **Renaud Weber**, director of the Swiss Judicial Academy and prosecutor specialised in major sexual crimes and human trafficking, Dr. **Kimberly Collins**, Senior Lecturer Forensic Psychology, Department of Psychology and Sports Science, School of Social Sciences and Law, Teesside University, UK.

Since trafficking in human beings is unlike any other type of criminal investigation, due to the uniquely intimate and invasive nature of the crime, child victim interview are essential for finding evidence. It is critical to identify the differing exploitative situations into which children are trafficked, in order to orient and/or corroborate criminal investigations and proceeds, thereby ensuring the efficient prosecution of potential traffickers.

In order to correctly interview child victims, interviewers coming from different fields such as law enforcement, NGOs and psychologists need to be mindful of the different challenges existing when interviewing children. This thematic session provided a comprehensive overview of the latest research and best practices that exist, in order for OSCE participating States to adopt the necessary legal framework, methodology and techniques to correctly interview child victims.

Participants discussed best practices for building rapport and how rapport techniques can be used for children to provide extensive narratives during the interview.

Based on the presentations and discussions, the following recommendations were made:

- *Child interviews are to be recorded (audio-visually), in order to limit the number of interviews;*
- *Administrators and investigators have to actively co-operate and communicate;*
- *Practitioners who are in contact with child victims need to be very well trained on child interviewing techniques;*
- *If a confrontation is requested and needed, it is necessary to provide appropriate logistics to allow for non-direct confrontation via technical means, and not directly;*
- *The role of all representatives allowed to be present during the child interview should be clarified before the interview;*
- *Good rapport-building practices will improve children's communication and should be heeded;*
- *Rapport-building should begin as soon as children enter the criminal justice system;*
- *The interview environment is central to facilitating the building of rapport and collecting of evidence, it should therefore be comfortable, safe and child friendly;*
- *Rapport building provides an opportunity to assess children's communication and cognitively prepare them for the interview;*
- *There are various non-verbal indicators that provide evidence of established rapport. These indicators should be taken into consideration;*
- *The practice recall technique should be used to help establish rapport and facilitate children's communication;*
- *Practitioners should be aware of the non-verbal indicators of rapport as evidence that rapport has been established.*

The forthcoming review of the UN Global Action Plan in light of new human trafficking trends

The session was co-organized by the Permanent Delegation of the Republic of Belarus to the OSCE and the OSR/CTHB, with contributions from ILO, IOM, OHCHR, UNICEF and UNODC. **Larysa Belskaya**, Head of the Directorate for Multilateral Diplomacy, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus acted as rapporteur. The session was moderated by **Ruth Freedom Pojman**, Senior Adviser, Office of the OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and addressed a range of issues related to the forthcoming Review of the UN Global Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Persons (GPoA) in accordance with UNGA Assembly Resolution 70/179, "Strengthening the Coordination of Efforts to Combat Human Trafficking".

Featuring a number of UN agencies participating in the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons (ICAT) chaired by the OHCHR this year, the session panel agreed that the GPoA appraisal should move from policy discussion to co-ordinated action and measures by all stakeholders, including States, international organizations, civil society, the private sector, law enforcement agencies, and other partners; further foster collaboration among countries of origin, transit, and destination, and also within countries internally; and ensure the effectiveness of such coordination at all levels - national, regional and global. The review should take stock of such new challenges or “emerging dimensions” of human trafficking such as trafficking in conflicts, trafficking along new migration routes, human trafficking for labour exploitation, trafficking in supply chains, trafficking for the purpose of organ removal, and define addressing child trafficking as an unconditional priority. The appraisal should confirm the global commitment to eliminate violence against children, (Sustainable Development Goal (SDG 16), of which child trafficking is a part (16.2)), including through the Global Alliance for Children.

Pertinent to this year’s focus of the *Alliance* conference, the recommendations of the session include:

- *Ensuring the best interests of the child throughout all relevant processes and procedures, including family reunification, resettlement and relocation, and legal residence;*
- *Further strengthening existing child protection systems that hinge on multidisciplinary work, transnational collaboration and durable solutions;*
- *Strengthening the commitment from business to end child labour by 2025 (SDG target 8.7 overall by 2030), including through business platforms and the recent declaration on multinational enterprises (MNEs) that was adopted in March, providing direct guidance to enterprises on social policy and sustainable workplace practices adopted by governments, employers and workers from around the world;*
- *Ratifying the 2014 Protocol to the Convention 29 on Forced Labour in order to address trafficking for labour exploitation, including migrant workers and women and children;*
- *Improving data collection and knowledge sharing, both in the context of new human trafficking trends and as regards figures on child labour and child trafficking, so as to inform further decision making and assess impact and progress;*
- *Highlighting the interrelation of combating child trafficking, the elimination of violence against children and achieving the SDGs during the GPoA appraisals until 2025;*
- *Ensuring consistency and coherency of all anti-trafficking efforts, including through the ratification of all relevant international instruments and strengthening of the implementation of national, regional and global anti-trafficking commitments and instruments;*
- *Maintaining the focus on partnerships, taking into account inputs from civil society encouraging private sector involvement and maximizing the use of collaborative*

expert platforms such as the Alliance Against Trafficking in Persons, ICAT, Alliance 8.7, Global Alliance for Children, and other.

Panel 3: Looking forward: guidelines for policy development and implementation

The Rapporteurs of the preceding panels and the moderators of the thematic sessions featured as speakers in Panel 3, moderated by **Paul Bekkers**, Director of the Office of the OSCE Secretary General. The Panel was opened with a keynote address by **Myria Vassiliadou**, EU Anti-trafficking Coordinator, European Commission.

In her keynote address, Myria Vassiliadou called for the unconditional implementation of the existing anti-trafficking legal framework, dwelled on the complexity of specific child protection challenges, including status determination, identification and data collection, and warned against any attempts to build a culture of impunity for those who abuse children and human rights in general.

Following the presentations of the recommendations from the previous panels and thematic sessions, together with subsequent final observations from participants, the floor was given to Ambassador **Madina Jarbussynova** to deliver her closing remarks. Ambassador Jarbussynova re-affirmed that the OSCE would continue to work towards ensuring that anti-trafficking actions in crisis situations are systematically integrated into humanitarian responses, as well as on raising awareness regarding the importance of prevention and protection measures to tackle the vulnerability of children at risk. These measures should harmoniously be applied to emerging trafficking trends, while child protection systems must be streamlined across the OSCE region. The Special Representative reiterated that her Office would continue working tirelessly with partners and the participating States to strengthen synergies among a wide range of actors, from national authorities to referral mechanisms, towards a truly multi-agency response.

In conclusion, Ambassador Jarbussynova thanked all moderators, rapporteurs, speakers and participants and expressed her desire to continue the successful co-operation with all *Alliance* partners, participating States and Partners for Co-operation.