



Preventing Trafficking in Human beings: Challenges and Solutions Vilnius, 25-26 October 2007

Opening address by Mr Hanno Hartig, Head of Department, Directorate General of Human Rights and Legal Affairs, Council of Europe

- It is a pleasure for me to represent the Council of Europe and to have the opportunity to address the participants of this Conference on *Preventing Trafficking in Human beings: Challenges and Solutions*. I would like to express my gratitude to the Government of Lithuania, the OSCE and the UNODC for organising this important event in the framework of the Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking.
- The Council of Europe firmly believes that no country or organisation is capable of defeating trafficking alone: isolated action is bound to fail, while concerted action has a far greater chance of being effective. Therefore the Council of Europe welcome this Global Initiative and as emphasised by Secretary General Terry Davis on several occasions, our Organisation is ready to take active part in this the Global Initiative.
- The *Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings* is the first European treaty in this field and compliments the provisions of the UN Palermo Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons. It is a comprehensive treaty focusing on the protection of victims of trafficking and the safeguarding of their rights. It also aims to prevent trafficking and to prosecute traffickers. In addition, the Convention provides for the setting up of an effective and independent monitoring mechanism to ensure the implementation of the obligations contained in the Convention. With the Council of Europe Convention, we have a new tool to prevent and combat trafficking more effectively.
- Last year, the Council of Europe launched a Campaign to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings under the slogan *Human being – not for sale*, highlighting the different measures which can be taken to prevent this new form of slavery, as well as measures to protect the human rights of victims and to prosecute the traffickers. In particular, the campaign aims to promote the widest possible signature and ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings in order that it may enter into force rapidly.

- In relation to the specific theme of the Conference – the prevention of trafficking-, I would like to underline that trafficking in human beings takes many forms, cuts across various fields and has implications for various branches of society. To be effective, and given the nature of the phenomenon, preventive action against trafficking must be coordinated. The CoE Convention is therefore concerned to promote a multidisciplinary coordination approach by requiring that Parties take measures to establish or strengthen coordination nationally between the various bodies responsible for preventing and combating trafficking in human beings. The Convention makes it a requirement to coordinate all the sectors whose action is essential in preventing and combating trafficking, such as the agencies with social, police, migration, customs, judicial or administrative responsibilities, non-governmental organisations, other organisations with relevant responsibilities and other elements of civil society.
- The Convention lists prevention policies and programmes which states must establish or support to prevent trafficking. Such measures vary in character and may have short-, medium-, or long-term effect. For example, *research* on combating trafficking is essential for devising effective prevention methods. *Information, awareness-raising and education campaigns* are important short-term prevention measures, particularly in the countries of origin. *Social and economic initiatives* tackle the underlying and structural causes of trafficking and require long-term investment. It is widely recognised that improvement of economic and social conditions in countries of origin and measures to deal with extreme poverty would be the most effective way of preventing trafficking. Among social and economic initiatives, improved training and more employment opportunities for people liable to be traffickers' prime targets would undoubtedly help prevent trafficking in human beings. Furthermore, the Convention stated that it is essential that those policies and programmes are based on gender mainstreaming and a child-rights approach to children.
- Another important measure to prevent trafficking is to enable people to emigrate and immigrate lawfully. It is essential that would-be immigrants have accurate information about legal opportunities for migration, employment conditions and their rights and duties. The measure is aimed at counteracting traffickers' misinformation so that people recognise traffickers' offers for what they are and know better than to take them up.
- The CoE Convention also requires that Parties take specific preventive measures with regard to children, in particular to creating a "*protective environment*" for children so as to make them less vulnerable to trafficking and enable them to grow up without harm and to lead decent lives.
- The CoE Convention places a positive obligation on Parties to adopt and reinforce measures for discouraging client demand effectively. The drafters sought to underline the importance of tackling demand in order to prevent and combat the traffic itself. The aim of measures is to achieve effective dissuasion. The measures involved may be legislative, administrative, educational, social, cultural or of other kinds.
- The media and civil society have been key agencies in identifying demand as one of the main causes of trafficking, and the measures accordingly seek to create maximum

awareness and recognition of their role and responsibility in that field. Information campaigns targeting relevant groups could also be conducted, with involvement, where appropriate, of political decision-makers and public authorities. Lastly, educational measures play an important part in discouraging demand. For example, educational programmes for school children could not only advantageously tell them about the trafficking phenomenon but also alert them to gender issues, questions of dignity and integrity of human beings, and the consequences of gender-based discrimination.

- Based on the UN Palermo Protocol, the Convention also contains a range of measures for prevention and border detection of transnational trafficking in human beings and measures to ensure the validity of travel or identity documents.
- Non-governmental organisations play an important role as do other elements of civil society in preventing trafficking in human beings. Close cooperation with them is therefore required.
- In preparation for the entry into force of the Convention, the Council of Europe will organise a high-level conference on its monitoring mechanism in Strasbourg on 8-9 November this year. Our member states and international and non-governmental organisations active in this field have been invited to participate in order to contribute to the setting up GRETA. As you know the Convention provides for the setting up of an effective and independent monitoring mechanism capable of controlling the implementation of the obligations contained in the Convention. The Group of Experts against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA) will be composed of independent and highly qualified experts. GRETA has the task of adopting a report and conclusions on each state's implementation of the Convention. Experience has proved that, in areas where independent human rights monitoring mechanisms exist within the Council of Europe, in the fields of torture and minorities for example, they have high credibility. GRETA is undoubtedly one of the main strengths of the Convention.
- To finally I would like to recall that the Convention will enter into force with 10 ratifications. To date, it has been ratified by nine¹ and signed by 28 other Council of Europe member states². In order that the Convention may enter into force and its monitoring mechanism set up rapidly, I urge you all to work towards the signature and ratification of this Convention by your respective countries.

Thank you very much for your attention

¹ Albania, Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Denmark, Georgia, Moldova, Romania and Slovakia.

² Andorra, Armenia, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cyprus, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malta, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, San Marino, Serbia, Slovenia, Sweden, "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", Ukraine and the United Kingdom.