



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1346 Vienna, 25 November 2021

EU Statement in Response to the Report by the OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, Mr. Valiant Richey

1. The European Union warmly welcomes the OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and thanks him for his report.
2. Combatting trafficking in human beings remains a key priority of the European Union. As you rightly outlined today, it is both a security issue and a human rights issue. We share your view that trafficking is a highly profitable crime and that impunity for traffickers remains a serious problem. The EU and its Member States are committed to working closely with international partners to promote adherence to international legal standards on trafficking in persons, in line with UNTOC and the Palermo Protocols.
3. The EU has in place a solid legal and policy framework to address trafficking in human beings, under the horizontal mandate of the EU Anti-trafficking Coordinator, emanating from the EU Anti-trafficking Directive, and ensuring a coherent response to address trafficking in human beings within and outside the EU. Through its Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2020-2024, the EU reinforced its ambition to counter impunity for all perpetrators involved in trafficking in human beings and to assist and protect victims, in particular women and children. Additionally, in April the EU Commission adopted a new EU Strategy on Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings (2021 – 2025) which provides a comprehensive response to trafficking, from preventing the crime, and protecting and empowering victims to bringing traffickers to justice.

4. We continue to support the “policy to practice” methodology implemented by your Office in assisting Participating States and Partners for Co-operation in the implementation of their OSCE anti-trafficking commitments. In this respect, the EU would like to express its appreciation for your continued efforts in increasing the quantity and quality of prosecutions, notably by providing training programs for prosecutors and judges. We also continue to support your work on financial investigations and your practical approach to it. We welcome that, after a pause during the pandemic, you were again able to travel through the OSCE region and to resume simulation-based trainings, fostering multi-agency cooperation but also victim-centred investigation and prosecution.
5. We highly appreciate your work on protection of victims, notably by examining which factors and vulnerabilities make it easier for traffickers to exploit people. We look forward to the publication of the paper on persons belonging to national minorities and trafficking in human beings, and how discrimination based on race and ethnicity is a vulnerability factor prior, during and after the trafficking process. We consider the choice to devote next year’s Alliance to effective protection of victims as highly appropriate.
6. We share many of the findings highlighted during the Alliance this year. As you rightly point out, trafficking in human beings is a financially motivated crime, driven by demand. It is imperative that we discourage the demand that fosters trafficking for the purpose of labour and sexual exploitation. As part of the new EU trade policy, the Commission will promote sustainable and responsible value chains on mandatory due diligence, including effective action and enforcement mechanisms to ensure that forced labour does not find a place in the value chains of EU companies.
7. We would also like to stress the importance of addressing the gender dimension of human trafficking. In this light, we commend you for your study on applying gender-sensitive approaches in combatting trafficking in human beings, which offers insights on the gender aspects of trafficking. A gender-sensitive approach is crucial to better protect the victims, but also to increase the efficiency of the criminal response.
8. The EU has always been a staunch supporter of partnerships to ensure effective cooperation and coordination of efforts in the fight against trafficking in human beings.

Therefore, we welcome the work you carried out so far with respect to cooperation with UN bodies and with the Council of Europe on the one hand, and with the OSCE Institutions and Field Missions, on the other hand. We once again commend the leadership role played by your Office in 2019 and 2020 as co-chair of the UN's Inter-Agency Coordination Group Against Trafficking (ICAT). We encourage you to continue to focus on more elaborated and better-coordinated partnerships, including with the UNODC, in order to promote full implementation of the Palermo Convention and its two additional Protocols.

9. To conclude, we take a very positive view of your work this year and thank you for your efforts. It is essential to ensure a comprehensive approach when addressing trafficking in human beings, one that is human rights-based, victim-centred, gender-sensitive and age-specific. We look forward to continuing our co-operation with you and your team and wish you every success.

The Candidate Countries the REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, SERBIA* and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA countries ICELAND, LIECHTENSTEIN and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, GEORGIA, ANDORRA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

* Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.