



**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
OSCE Special Representative for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings**

**-
23rd Alliance against Trafficking in Persons Conference
Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings
Opening Remarks**

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honor and pleasure to open the 23rd Alliance against Trafficking in Persons Conference. I am delighted to political leaders and participants from all of the 57 OSCE participating States, as well as many international organizations, over 250 NGOs, 60 academic institutions, 30 businesses and 6 media outlets joining us in person and online.

Our Conference will primarily be conducted in English, but please note that translation in all the official OSCE languages is available, both online and offline. Please also note that all of the sessions of the Conference are being recorded and broadcasted live on the OSCE website.

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This year marks the 20th Anniversary of the OSCE Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings as well as the anniversary of the establishment of the position of the OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings. The Action Plan was a landmark moment, adopted by participating States with the goal of enhancing the OSCE's efforts in fighting trafficking in human beings.

So, two decades later, where are we?

It is estimated that there are about 27 million victims of human trafficking and forced labor globally. That is more victims than at any other point in history. Yet, less than 1% of victims are identified. That means less than 1%

of victims globally receive the assistance, care and legal protection they are entitled to. The exploitation of these 27 million victims generates an estimated \$150 billion dollars in profits each year for their traffickers. 150 billion. That figure is higher than the national economies of 33 out of 57 OSCE participating States.

Global prosecution data also shows that human traffickers enjoy widespread impunity. There are about 10,000 prosecutions of trafficking cases worldwide every year, which is a drop in the ocean compared to the millions of victims. Or rather, half a drop, if you consider that only a few years ago, in 2015, the number of prosecutions was almost twice that, over 19,000.

The truth is that 20 years after the Action Plan, our overall efforts to combat - and eventually end human trafficking - are not only insufficient, but *increasingly* insufficient. The scale of the crime has expanded, the nature of the crime has evolved, and our ability and effort to adjust and respond accordingly is lagging behind.

The problem here is not the Action Plan, which - together with its addenda - is comprehensive and forward leaning. The challenge is that, collectively, we have not committed the necessary political will and leadership to implement the Action Plan at the necessary scale.

Political will is the single most important ingredient for our success. Showcasing and inspiring national leadership will be the aim of this conference over the next two days. By attending the Alliance, you have chosen to be part of a collective effort to turn the tide. To stay true to our commitments to confront this violation of human dignity. To move from *discussing* human trafficking to *ending* it.

It is telling that we have a record number of in-person participants for this year's Alliance, and such a diverse representation of stakeholders - from survivors and frontline responders, to lawmakers and political figures. From private sector businesses to public sector representatives. This shows a

willingness and commitment to face the challenge and mobilize leadership *across* our societies.

The first step in this conversation to end human trafficking is to open ourselves to the possibility that we *can* end human trafficking. From the past 20 years, we have some great examples of national, regional and international responses to combating this heinous crime – responses that have achieved progress or are poised for impact. This week, we have convened inspiring national leaders throughout the agenda so that we can hear about these examples and consider their broader application.

To paraphrase the motto of our Chair in Office: leadership is all about people, about choosing hope, and about perseverance. At this year's Alliance, you will hear from speakers who have demonstrated this in their countries and who in different ways exemplify the leadership qualities that will help us all achieve impact.

Now, before giving the floor to the impressive line-up of opening and keynote speakers who will be addressing you after me, let me just give you a few details about the programme of this conference.

After the welcoming and keynote addresses, Panel 1 will dive deeper into the nature and scale of the problem and explore why strong national leadership is necessary to overcome the challenge. The discussion will cover different forms of exploitation and their manifestations, as well as current trends and patterns. It will also explore gaps in responses across the OSCE region and their consequences.

Day two will focus on solutions.

We will start day two with a survivor-led conversation on anti-trafficking leadership, where you will hear directly from men and women who have chosen to share their insights based on their lived experience. We strongly believe in survivor engagement, and have this year for the first time at the Alliance provided a platform specifically for survivor reflections on the topic of leadership and the way forward for the anti-trafficking movement.

This conversation will be followed by Panel 2, which will show case examples of the most effective anti-trafficking systems and structures – the very architecture and necessary building blocks for lasting impact. This is critical. These bedrock structures in each country are needed to effectively combat trafficking in human beings. Yet they are not a given, and national leadership is the catalyst to put them into place and ensure their implementation.

In Panel 3, we will move to looking at leading examples of national laws and policies to combat trafficking. This panel will take a closer look at how national leadership can lead to the introduction of game-changing laws, comprehensive anti-trafficking approaches and action plans – including those that address and capture the scale and evolving nature of the crime.

As per OSCE tradition, in the programme we have included side-events, and this year we have four, organized by our office and our partners. They will take place during the lunch break tomorrow between 13:00 and 15:00. I encourage you all to have a closer look at the program for these side-events, as they will supplement our main program with some very interesting, in-depth discussions and examples of excellent anti-trafficking work.

Allow me to thank all the panelists and speakers who agreed to share their expertise in the course of these two days. Each of them will offer unique insight and guidance for States to step up their efforts to combat and eradicate human trafficking at the national, regional and international levels. After each of the thematic panels 1, 2 and 3, we will welcome floor interventions from States, NGOs, International organizations and others. Floor requests are already quite abundant this year, so we I'd like to kindly ask (insist) that everyone stick to the 2min that have been assigned to you. If you'd like to take the floor after any of the three thematic panels and have not yet notified us, please do flag it to my colleague Marianne Angvik, who is sitting right behind me and who is collecting those requests.

