



14th Alliance against Trafficking in Persons Conference
“Ethical Issues in Preventing and Combating Human Trafficking”
Vienna, 4 November 2014

Opening speech by Ambassador Thomas Greminger
Chairperson of the OSCE Permanent Council and Permanent Representative of Switzerland
to the OSCE

2014 Swiss OSCE Chairmanship

Excellencies,
Distinguished participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Swiss OSCE Chairmanship it is my **pleasure to open the 14th Alliance against Trafficking in Persons Conference** on the topic *Ethical Issues in Preventing and Combating Human Trafficking*. I would like to thank **the organizers** and warmly welcome all participants. Allow me also to offer a special **welcome to our new Special Representative** and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, Amb. Madina Jarbussynova. As the Chair of the OSCE and strong promoter of the joint OSCE-Council of Europe efforts to combat trafficking in human beings, Switzerland welcomes and **supports this unique platform for multi-level co-operation**. We are convinced that there are benefits in further strengthening our co-operation and enhancing the implementation of our political commitments in combating this transnational threat which violates the human rights of millions of people in the OSCE region. The purpose of the 14th *Alliance conference* is **to enhance the coherence of the international and national action on addressing the ethical dilemmas** that emerge when preventing and combating trafficking in human beings.

This topic is very timely and important for four main reasons.

Firstly, it is imperative that **ethical considerations underpin and guide our comprehensive response to human trafficking**. And this means the full implementing of obligations stemming from our political commitments, including those in the *Addendum to the OSCE Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings: One Decade Later from 2013*. Focusing on ethical issues calls for exploring **how we can best discourage the demand for human trafficking**, as also stated in the Trafficking in Persons Protocol supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. Switzerland recognizes that the **effective implementation of Codes of Conducts** has a significant impact on preventing trafficking in human beings. Moreover, we underscore the importance of raising awareness among the consumers of services and products that might have a link to human trafficking.

Secondly, the *Alliance* provides a multi-level arena to discuss ethical issues and develop co-ordinated approaches to combat human trafficking. Switzerland expects this *Alliance* to pave the way to a more coherent international response to human trafficking by **gathering expertise, exchanging good practices, enhancing dialogue** and **harmonizing approaches** between national authorities, international organizations, civil society and other stakeholders in the OSCE region. As a co-organizer of the **OSCE-CoE conference Not for Sale – Joining Forces Against**

Trafficking in Human Beings last February, Switzerland has seen the value of enhanced co-operation, which has since further evolved in line with the priorities outlined in the Joint Framework of Action. I am also glad to announce that, as concrete follow-up activities, the OSCE and CoE recently organized a joint judicial training in Strasbourg (9/10 October 2014) and are holding a joint side event today on measures to prevent trafficking in human beings for labour exploitation. Moreover, Switzerland attaches particular importance to the **role that civil society plays in voicing the concerns on the ground** and welcomes the involvement of several NGOs in this *Alliance*.

Thirdly, by focusing on ethical issues we are actually **reaffirming the central role of the human being**. In other words, we should never forget the individuals involved in this phenomenon. And here I am referring both to the victims and to “consumers” of the goods and services produced by trafficked people. Ultimately, our discussion on ethics and multi-level co-operation should, on the one hand, positively affect the safety of the victims and people vulnerable to trafficking, and, on the other hand, prevent those who - knowingly or unknowingly - make use of those goods and services to cause further harm. Moreover, an ethical discussion on combating human trafficking should also **deal with the root causes of trafficking**, often founded in poverty and inequality and in particular, gender inequality. The power imbalance between the sexes makes women and girls vulnerable to violence and trafficking for domestic servitude and for sexual exploitation. At the same time, men are more prone to other forms of human trafficking, such as labour exploitation and forced conscription into armed groups.

Finally, as Chair of the OSCE during the crisis in Ukraine, Switzerland is glad that the participants shall have the opportunity to discuss the **ethical implications of combating human trafficking also in the context of conflict and crisis situations**. I believe that the OSCE should consider the **impact of crisis and conflicts on human trafficking**. For instance, it is important to carefully follow the developments of the crisis in Ukraine and support all relevant stakeholders with preventing and combating human trafficking in this new context.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Amb. Jarbussynova for informing the Chairmanship about the potential repercussions of the on-going crisis on local human trafficking trends and the need for more factual monitoring and reporting. While human security in the region has seriously deteriorated since the beginning of the crisis, the vulnerability of local populations to various forms of human trafficking - including for the purpose of sexual and labour exploitation, as well as forced conscription - has sharply increased.

Excellences, ladies and gentleman, human trafficking **is a serious crime and a grave violation of human rights**. To make our efforts more effective, we have to carefully consider the ethical issues in preventing and combating human trafficking, as well as find synergies in our national and international approaches. The different panels at this year's *Alliance* range from actions to prevent human trafficking in the private sector and in conflict and crisis situations, to the ethical treatment of victims and to medical ethics regarding trafficking for the purpose of organ removal. In my view, they clearly illustrate **the importance of endorsing a cross-dimensional response to human trafficking. We should never lose sight of those estimated 20.9 million victims of forced labour and human trafficking worldwide**. These are “real people”. **They deserve our attention!**

Switzerland looks forward to the good practices that will emerge from this event, and to their follow-up, especially with regard to developing and implementing sound and sustainable ethical responses to prevent and combat human trafficking. Thank you.