



## **United States Mission to the OSCE**

# **U.S. National Statement on World Day Against Trafficking in Persons**

As delivered by Deputy Chief of Mission Katherine Brucker  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
July 27, 2023

Today, the United States joins the United Nations, OSCE participating States and other countries, communities, and nongovernmental organizations around the world to commemorate July 30 as World Day Against Trafficking in Persons.

The theme of this year's commemoration is "Reach Every Victim of Trafficking, Leave No One Behind," and it could not be more apt. As Secretary of State Blinken noted in presenting the United States' own Trafficking in Persons Report just last month, "human trafficking is an affront to our values... It erodes our communities, weakens the rule of law, and undermines our national security." We must all redouble our efforts and work together to support victims of trafficking and fight this scourge with all the resources we have available.

Unfortunately, despite many of our best efforts, global crises, technological developments, conflicts, climate change, socio-economic pressures, and international criminal organizations continue to drive and exacerbate human trafficking. Here in the OSCE region, Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine has produced Europe's greatest crisis of refugees and internally displaced persons since World War II. The vast majority of these refugees and internally displaced persons are women and children who are at greater risk of trafficking.

I'd like to share just one story highlighted in the United States' 2023 Trafficking in Persons Report that illustrates the human toll of human trafficking. Fourteen-year-old Daria – not her real name – fled to the United Kingdom in 2022 after Russia's airstrikes killed her family in Ukraine. While Daria was awaiting processing at a temporary shelter for unaccompanied minors, a young man offered her English lessons, a place to live, and a job as a waitress while she waited for her asylum case to proceed. Believing his promises, Daria left the shelter with the young man, who took her to a hotel room in a nearby city. There he abused her, forced her to take drugs, exploited her through commercial sex, and threatened her with deportation if she went to the police. Luckily, local police eventually rescued Daria and returned her to the shelter.

As in Daria's story, unaccompanied minors from Ukraine are at particularly high risk of trafficking, as are other refugee and displaced populations from Ukraine, members of ethnic or religious minority communities, third-country nationals, persons with disabilities, LGBTQI+ persons, the Roma community, and others. We remain vigilant and urge our partners to do so as well, and to continue robust protection measures to head off a human trafficking crisis. Thousands of men, women, and children like Daria around the world illustrate the very real dangers and costs of human trafficking.

We applaud the Office of the Special Representative and Coordinator for Countering Trafficking in Human Beings, and the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights' anti-trafficking unit, for working to counter the scourge of human trafficking in the OSCE region. The United States is proud to support both Offices' projects with over \$3.5 million in funding, including courses for Ukrainian first responders, workshops on preventing labor exploitation in supply chains, and mapping online platforms that enable trafficking. The latter project is especially important, as the Internet has become the greatest single facilitator of trafficking. Participating States should work to strengthen legislative frameworks to hold websites that facilitate such crimes accountable, as the United States did in 2018 with the "Allow States and Victims to Fight Online Sex Trafficking" and "Stop Enabling Sex Traffickers" Acts.

We also applaud the Office of the Special Representative and Coordinator for Countering Trafficking in Human Beings for partnering with the Thomson Reuters Foundation, Vodaphone, Uber, and others on OSCE's BeSafe campaign. BeSafe provides critical information to educate refugees and displaced persons from Ukraine on how to identify the warning signs of potential human trafficking, find assistance when necessary, and protect themselves from criminal organizations, sexual exploitation, or forced labor. To date, thousands of Ukraine's people displaced by Russia's war of aggression have used BeSafe resources while hundreds of thousands more have been educated on the dangers and warning signs of trafficking by accessing BeSafe materials through social media.

Tackling a global problem like human trafficking through policy reform and other means will require strong partnerships among governments, businesses, and civil society to ensure victims and survivors of trafficking receive the protection and services they deserve.

Despite the tremendous progress this organization and others have made in combating these horrific crimes, there is much more work to be done. We must not stand by and allow individuals to become victims, and we must act so that victims become survivors. On this World Day Against Trafficking in Persons, let us recommit ourselves to the eradication of human trafficking.

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