

**SEMINAR ON CO-OPERATION TO PREVENT TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS IN THE
MEDITERRANEAN REGION**

Opening address of the OSCE Permanent Council Chairman, Ambassador Ihor Prokopchuk

8 February 2013, Rome

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my honor to address on behalf of the Ukrainian OSCE Chairmanship the distinguished participants of the OSCE seminar devoted to the co-operation aimed at preventing trafficking in human beings in the Mediterranean region.

At the outset I wish to thank the OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings Dr. Maria Grazia Giammarinaro for the initiative of organizing this event. My thanks also go to the host country Italy and its Government for the warm hospitality.

The Ukrainian Chairmanship would also like to express its appreciation to all OSCE participating States and Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation for their continuous engagement through active participation in the OSCE's political dialogue and practical activities in the framework of the OSCE Mediterranean Partnership.

The Chairmanship views today's seminar as an important follow-up to the OSCE Mediterranean Conference, which took place here in Rome on 30-31 October 2012 and aimed at enhancing political dialogue and strengthening action-oriented cooperation in line with the Ministerial Council Decision No. 5/11 on Partners for Co-operation adopted in December 2011 in Vilnius. This decision should continue to guide us in further exploring areas of enhanced interaction with the Partners and possible assistance from the OSCE, to make our efforts successful and mutually beneficial.

The Ukrainian Chairmanship is committed to support the advancement of the organization's dialogue with the Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation.

When chairing the OSCE Mediterranean Contact Group in 2012, Ukraine sought to further prioritize and streamline the cooperation within the partnership in accordance with the needs, goals and national priorities of the partner-states. This task remains high on our agenda in our new capacity as the OSCE Chairmanship and this seminar will contribute to achieving that goal.

Ukraine will continue to support this approach and the upcoming initiatives that were agreed with the Partners, such as the planned workshops on sustainable energy and on enhancing anti-terrorism co-operation planned for 2013.

Let me note that Chairmanship highly values the SG's engagement in promoting more practical co-operation as well as high level political dialogue with the Mediterranean Partners.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

By adopting in 2011 the Vilnius Ministerial Declaration on Combating all Forms of Human Trafficking the participating States reiterated their grave concern that despite sustained measures undertaken at the international, regional and national levels, trafficking remains a serious problem.

Human trafficking targets human beings in all countries and regions and thus violates the fundamentals on which our democracies, the rule of law and human rights are built. Moreover, it is often directly or indirectly connected to organized criminal groups within a single country and across borders.

In view of gravity of this crime and its impact on security and stability throughout the OSCE region the Ukrainian OSCE Chairmanship has prioritized the issue of combatting in human beings for the human dimension agenda in 2013. This subject has been given particular prominence in our Priorities for Action.

The core objective of the Ukrainian Chairmanship will be to promote fight against all forms of this heinous crime that violates human dignity and undermines human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Particular focus will be attached to such forms of trafficking as sexual exploitation, forced labor as well as support for victims of human traffickers, strengthening coordination between international partners, including civil society, who contribute to global efforts to combat human trafficking.

The Ukrainian Chairmanship plans to dedicate a Chairmanship's event to the subject of combating trafficking in human beings, which will bring together officials, experts, and representatives of national and international organizations, non-governmental organizations and academia from the OSCE region.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Chairmanship strongly believes that cooperation within countries and across borders is crucial to the effective combating of human trafficking as confirmed in numerous commitments and the respective OSCE Action Plan. Human Trafficking goes beyond the OSCE region, which makes joint efforts with the OSCE Partners for Cooperation so crucial in this area.

This Seminar is an important initiative to discuss existing good practices and challenges in combating human trafficking in the Mediterranean region as well as more concrete ways on how all actors – intergovernmental, governmental and non-governmental – can unite their efforts.

The Chairmanship is convinced that our today's discussion with the participation of more than 100 policy makers, government experts and civil society organisations across the Mediterranean region will lay ground for future joint initiatives that will enhance the human rights protection of those exploited or vulnerable and help us more effectively prevent human trafficking. We stand ready to continue to support such follow-up initiatives in the framework of the OSCE Mediterranean Partnership.

The seminar's agenda includes highly relevant and interesting issues providing good basis for exchange of views and experiences, as well as for generating new ideas to guide our cooperation in this area.

I wish everyone a productive discussion that could strengthen the OSCE engagement with its Mediterranean Partners and help develop proactive recommendations for the necessary follow-up.

I thank for attention.