



## EUROPEAN UNION

### **OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting Warsaw, 16 - 27 September 2019**

---

#### **EU statement – Working Session 9: Humanitarian issues and other commitments, including: Combating trafficking in human beings; Refugees and displaced persons; Persons at risk of displacement**

---

Mr. Moderator,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its Member States.

Eradicating trafficking in human beings remains a key priority of the European Union. Trafficking of human beings is a serious organised crime and a grave human rights violation, explicitly prohibited in Article 5(3) of the Charter of Fundamental rights of the European Union. It is a crime driven by demand for all forms of exploitation and by very high profits. Both within and outside the EU, the vast majority of all human trafficking victims remains women and girls.

The EU has in place an ambitious and comprehensive legal and policy framework, anchored in the EU Anti-trafficking Directive, which is human rights-based, victim-centred, gender-specific, child-sensitive and under the horizontal mandate of the EU Anti-trafficking Coordinator. This framework is based on three priorities: countering the impunity that fosters the crime, improving victims' access to rights, and working towards a coordinated response within and outside the EU.

The 2018 European Commission Second progress report demonstrates improvements, especially relating to cross-border cooperation, collaboration with civil society, use of financial investigations, the intervention of joint investigation teams, and the development of national and transnational referral mechanisms. Nevertheless, the phenomenon continues to evolve and trafficking in human beings remains a crime characterised by impunity for the perpetrators and those who benefit from the victims' exploitation.



## EUROPEAN UNION

Human trafficking is a transnational threat to human security that should be addressed jointly by the countries of origin, transit and destination. Efficiently combating this global and complex crime thus requires a close cooperation between all OSCE participating States. Therefore, the fight against human trafficking has been high on the OSCE agenda over the past years and should remain a priority.

The EU welcomes the commitment of the OSCE participating States for setting up a long-term common strategy and implementing the 2003 Action Plan and its 2013 Addendum. The EU emphasises the need to ensure that funding matches policy priorities, to consistently take into account identified patterns and to avoid duplication of efforts.

The EU also strongly welcomes the adoption of two Decisions (respectively on strengthening efforts to prevent trafficking in human beings and on strengthening efforts to combat all forms of child trafficking, including for sexual exploitation, as well as other forms of sexual exploitation of children) during the 2017 Ministerial Council in Vienna, as well as the adoption of the Decision on strengthening efforts to prevent and combat child trafficking, including of unaccompanied minors, during the 2018 Ministerial Council in Milan. In addition to pursuing their work to combat child trafficking, we encourage participating States to take into account the disproportionate targeting of women and girls and to increase their efforts for addressing sexual exploitation, which continues to be the main reported form of exploitation.

Current challenges, such as unresolved conflicts, post-conflict situations, terrorism, weakening of social and economic structures or climate change, continue to create fertile grounds for trafficking and increase the difficulties to prevent it. In line with its comprehensive approach to security, the OSCE remains a privileged forum to address the interaction between these various challenges.

The EU regrets that asylum seekers, refugees, and internally displaced persons still face grave risks of human trafficking and exploitation. The EU further regrets the increase of IDPs across the OSCE region over the past years, in particular after the outbreak of the crisis in and around Ukraine. As principle 5 of the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement provides, *“all authorities and international actors shall respect and ensure respect for their obligations under international law, including human rights and humanitarian law, in all*



## EUROPEAN UNION

*circumstances, so as to prevent and avoid conditions that might lead to displacement of persons*". With respect to all categories of forcibly displaced people, the EU reiterates its call upon participating States to comply with their obligations under international law, to increase and facilitate humanitarian assistance and to ensure the right to a safe, dignified and voluntary return.

Over the past years, a lot has been achieved in delivering key actions for raising awareness towards all forms of human trafficking. We should pursue our efforts to keep the prevention and prosecution of human trafficking high on the OSCE political agenda. Tackling such a grave crime requires an appropriate criminal justice response, adapted to each form of exploitation. The EU remains committed to multilateralism and wishes to continue enhancing transnational law enforcement and judicial cooperation. It is also crucial to strengthen the mechanisms aimed at offering effective protection to the victims, to provide specific assistance to the most vulnerable categories of victims, and to facilitate the victims' access to justice.

We very much encourage the "policy to practice" methodology of the Office of the Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Being in assisting participating States and Partners for Co-operation in the implementation of their OSCE anti-trafficking commitments. We further outline the value of developing innovative training programs, such as the "(collaborative) simulation-based" trainings, aiming at building the capacity of participating States and Partners for Co-operation to effectively investigate and prosecute trafficking of human beings, as well as to promptly identify trafficked persons.

The EU supports the ongoing work on the intersection of technology and trafficking. We encourage to take into account identified patterns indicating that Internet and information technology facilitate in particular the exploitation of victims of trafficking in the sex and entertainment industry. Conversely, the potential of new technology can and should be used to enhance investigations and prosecutions of perpetrators, as well as the provision of assistance to victims.

Finally, the EU promotes more elaborated and better co-ordinated partnerships, both within the OSCE and across the international community. In this respect, the EU is fully committed to support the further implementation of the Global Plan of Action to Prevent and



## EUROPEAN UNION

Combat Trafficking in Human Beings and Smuggling of Human Beings (GLO.ACT), together with UNODC, IOM and UNICEF. Moreover, we welcome the co-chairing of the Inter-Agency Co-ordination Group Against Trafficking in Persons (ICAT) by the OSCE Office of the Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Being and UN Women this year. The Office co-chairing of ICAT is a clear sign of recognition of the work of the OSCE in this important field.

The fight against human trafficking is enshrined in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Indeed, peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future, is only conceivable if we *“take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour”* – as mentioned by SDG8.

Mr. Moderator,

Let me conclude by repeating the EU's desire for the OSCE to go on acting as a platform for elaborating a comprehensive and common response to human trafficking.

As rightfully stressed by the EU Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs, and Citizenship, Dimitris Avramopoulos, *“[t]housands of human beings are still trafficked every year in the European Union. This happens right under our watch – to women, children, to EU and non-EU citizens. Despite progress in some areas, there is an imperative need to end the culture of impunity for perpetrators and abusers. It is time for law enforcement and justice authorities across Member States to further step up cooperation and duly enforce existing legislation to catch those involved in this heinous crime and offer effective and rightful protection to the victims”*.

The European Union and its Member States are committed to join forces to pursue an effective anti-trafficking strategy. This should happen through close coordination and cooperation amongst OSCE participating States, Partners for Cooperation and all actors of civil society, as well as through the development of powerful and practical networks across borders and disciplines.

Recommendations to OSCE participating States:



## EUROPEAN UNION

- to continue to address trafficking in human beings with a comprehensive, victim oriented and human rights-based approach, which is gender and child sensitive, taking into account that mainly women and girls remain overwhelmingly targeted;
- to avoid duplication of efforts and strengthen the cooperation with civil society actors;
- to support the OSCE cross-dimensional perspective on combating human trafficking and to address all factors that contribute to creating favorable settings for exploitation of vulnerable persons;
- to pursue and further intensify joint efforts to address women and child trafficking, as well as trafficking for sexual exploitation, which remains persistently the most reported form;
- to work at countering the culture of impunity by supporting national authorities in strengthening transnational law enforcement and judicial cooperation and in improving the efficiency and effectiveness of investigations and prosecutions through concrete actions. Such actions should i.a. relate to the tracing of the profits derived from trafficking and the criminalisation of the use of services of victims of trafficking with the knowledge that they are trafficked;
- to improve the mechanisms aimed at offering effective protection to the victims and to facilitate the victims' access to justice;
- to encourage the ratification and implementation of key international instruments and to ensure the centrality of the existing solid international legal framework, including the standards and principles enshrined in the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime and its Protocols and the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

Thank you.

The Candidate Countries 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 and LIECHTENSTEIN, members of the European Economic Area, as well as the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, GEORGIA and ANDORRA align themselves with this statement.

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