



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

The Secretary General

**“ALLIANCE AGAINST TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS”
Child Trafficking: Responses and Challenges at local Level**

Vienna, Hofburg, Neuer Saal
May 26-27, 2008

Opening Remarks by Marc Perrin de Brichambaut
OSCE Secretary General

Dear Co-ordinator, Dear Eva,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honoured to join Minister Thors in welcoming you on behalf of the OSCE to this meeting of the ‘Alliance against Trafficking in Persons.’

Comparing notes, debating ideas, resolving on common action – all of these are key to building an international society of States that is healthy and effective in responding to the difficult challenge posed by the crime of human trafficking.

Our meeting today is, therefore, an example of the kind of network for innovation and common purpose at the international level that is so crucial for crafting the 21st century that we wish to see emerge.

The ‘Alliance Against Trafficking in Persons’ as the OSCE framework for such discussions is unique. It is an informal but sharp forum designed to provide the basis for professional dialogue and for sharing expertise and best practices. This meeting showcases the OSCE at its best -- acting as a network for innovative co-operation between government officials at the national and local level, representatives of international and regional organizations as well as civil society organizations. The

importance of the OSCE struggle against trafficking in human beings stems precisely from its role in forging such networks.

Please allow me to say a few words about the particular challenges posed by trafficking in children.

First, we should say that the international community has gotten off to a good start in addressing the crime of child trafficking. We have a comprehensive set of international instruments legally obliging governments to prevent child trafficking, to protect the victims and to prosecute the perpetrators. We have the strong political framework provided by a number of OSCE Ministerial Decisions since 2000 -- including the *OSCE Action Plan* and its *Addendum Addressing the Special Needs of Child Victims of Trafficking for Protection and Assistance*, which tackle various aspects of human trafficking and violence against children.

Participating States stand now responsible for implementing these Decisions, and they have taken to the task with dedication. The vast majority of States, indeed, has adopted anti-trafficking laws, established anti-trafficking structures and launched awareness-raising campaigns. All States recognize now the existence of this problem and its increasingly threatening scope across the OSCE region. These are excellent steps.

Nonetheless, the global challenge of child trafficking remains. Most of the hard work remains ahead of us.

The facts are damning. Nearly 50% of victims of human trafficking are minors below the age of 18 years. They are exploited in the sex business, agriculture, construction, they are enmeshed in domestic servitude, bought and sold for organ extraction and forced into organized begging. The most vulnerable parts of our societies are still subjected to abuse and enslavement – homeless children, those living in orphanages, child refugees and migrants, children who have no other choice but to abandon their studies and earn their living in the fields, factories and market places.

Responding to this challenge requires action at many levels.

A first level concerns the key role played by local authorities in combating child trafficking -- this is the theme of our conference. Whatever decisions are taken at the international level, their implementation depends on the capacity and will of local structures. For good reasons. Local authorities are close to realities on the ground. They are well acquainted with the specifics of each situation, its hidden potential and weaknesses. Local authorities are best placed to translate international imperatives to respond to local needs. Effective implementation depends on precisely this translation exercise.

Secondly, the struggle against child trafficking needs to involve new social partners – the private sector, the media, Internet-providers, school and medical institutions, services dealing with migrants, refugees, minorities, children with disabilities, and other vulnerable groups. Early action is vital for the health of each individual, and is the essential basis for building healthier societies over the longer term.

In this respect, I wish to underline the importance of non-governmental organizations in the participating States. They are the strongest advocates for the protection of child victims of trafficking of human beings. They have also developed unique expertise and experience in key dimensions of this struggle. NGOs deserve our support, both political and material. They are a valuable resource to draw on in our collective efforts.

Thirdly, we need not just more but *better* facts. Objective, detailed and disaggregated data provides the foundation for designing effective programmes and it is the basis for targeted action. The National Reporting and Monitoring Mechanisms are important for this reason.

My final point, in fact, is a principle that should guide all our efforts. National ownership is a key ingredient in the struggle to eradicate the crime of trafficking in human beings. The State is a pivotal platform for fostering better international co-operation, for translating agreements into local action, and for forging networks with civil society and all relevant social actors.

Consolidating the efforts of all actors, big and small, private and public, in the fight against trafficking in human beings, in combating violations of the rights of the child, is a precondition for success.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The fight against trafficking in human beings must be as multi-dimensional and complex as the threat itself is. The unique strength of the OSCE approach lies in the concept of comprehensive security that links the politico-military, economic and human dimensions. Combating trafficking requires concerted action on all three levels. As this conference shows, the OSCE is leading the way.

Political will is vital. It is my hope that the participants of this conference will develop innovative recommendations to encourage all the countries in the OSCE area to raise the fight against child trafficking to the highest political level.

The nature of this crime is such that single policies will not eradicate it once and for all. In this common struggle, every step matters.

I wish you success in the deliberations. Thank you for your attention.