



United States Mission to the OSCE

Session 14: Focus on identification, assistance and access to justice for the victims of trafficking

As delivered by Alex Johnson, Policy Advisor for the U.S. Helsinki Commission
to the OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting
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Madam Moderator,

The United States government commends the numerous efforts undertaken by the OSCE to promote trafficking victim identification, assistance, and access to justice. This specific topic for the 2008 HDIM reflects the increasing attention paid by participating States of the OSCE as they collaborate to combat trafficking in human beings. Achieving the goals of the OSCE Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings remains a priority for the United States. To this end, we have sought to consistently promote policies and partnerships to protect the victims of trafficking.

The United States government recognizes that the identification of victims is the first step in any comprehensive effort to combat this modern form of slavery. Thus, in order to address this problem domestically, we coordinate the efforts of several of our different federal agencies to combat trafficking. This includes a commitment of approximately \$23 million in Fiscal Year 2007 for domestic programs to boost anti-trafficking law enforcement efforts, identification of and assistance to trafficking victims, and awareness raising initiatives.

We continue to reaffirm the vision of enhanced, multi-agency cooperation and partnerships toward consistent victim identification and rescue. These efforts are principally led through cooperation among the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the Department of Justice, the Department of Homeland Security, the Department of Labor and the Department of State. These institutions also continue to collaborate with civil society, and draw from the field expertise of many NGOs that are often in direct contact with victims. Through this extensive and growing network, we have enhanced our ability to distinguish trafficking for labor exploitation from other instances of irregular employment. We have also improved our ability to more accurately distinguish trafficking for sexual exploitation from other related domestic criminal activity. This more accurate distinction allows our government to appropriately target industries often associated with exploitation for suitable oversight.

In our experience, appropriate victim identification remains paramount in the prosecution of trafficking cases. Unfortunately, some individuals may not be identified as victims due to intimidation and exploitation of victims' fears by traffickers. Such victims are hesitant to cooperate or even to identify themselves due to lack of awareness of their rights, and fear of retaliation by the traffickers against their families. Thus, only true integration of victim identification awareness throughout government agencies engaged in service delivery and civil

society will encourage those victims to come forward. This integration will allow for robust partnerships in the critical efforts to identify victims.

Any comprehensive effort to combat trafficking in persons must incorporate measures to address the complex web of factors that result in the trafficking and enslavement of fellow human beings. These factors certainly include poverty, unemployment, and discrimination against women, but other factors such as demand, weak rule of law and corruption play a large role as well. Many of these factors discourage victims from coming forward for fear of jeopardizing their only perceived means of overcoming poverty.

It is absolutely necessary also to acknowledge the importance of identifying potential traffickers in efforts to ensure the emancipation of the exploited. In particular, we continue to take action to fight the demand which fuels sex trafficking by, for example, aggressively investigating and prosecuting those who engage in child sex tourism in violation of the Prosecutorial Remedies and other Tools to end the Exploitation of Children Today (PROTECT) Act. Tracking those suspected of exploiting the victims of sex trafficking will continue to be a means to identify victims, as well as sources of potential victims.