



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

19th Alliance against Trafficking in Persons Conference

***“Using Technology to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings: Turning a
Liability into an Asset”***

Opening Remarks by

**Valiant Richey, Acting Co-ordinator for Combating
Trafficking in Human Beings**

Vienna, 08 April 2019

Your Excellencies,
Distinguished Participants,

In my capacity as the OSCE Acting Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, it is my honour to open the 19th *Alliance* against Trafficking in Persons Conference.

The Alliance Conference is a unique global platform that brings together a diversity of stakeholders who make a real difference in combating trafficking in human beings at the national, regional and international levels.

One of the many things I have admired about the innovative work of the OSCE—and the power of the Alliance against Trafficking in Persons in particular—has been the capacity to lay the foundation for ground-breaking policy action across 57 states. Over the years, the Alliance has set the stage for advancements in combating labour exploitation, addressing child trafficking, improving victim services, responding to domestic servitude, and building better partnerships.

This year is no exception: we have chosen to tackle the timely and important topic of technology. Although great progress has been achieved in combating human trafficking over the last two decades, the trafficking business model has unfortunately evolved quickly and brutally through the misuse of technology. Traffickers have learned to misuse technology to recruit, control and exploit victims more efficiently and at greater scale. And as you listen over the next two days, I encourage particular attention to the problem of volume: the misuse of technology has facilitated a scale of exploitation that seemed impossible only a decade ago. It can seem a daunting and discouraging state of affairs. The time has come for a change: we must harness technology as an asset in prevention,

protecting victims and prosecuting traffickers.

The OSCE already possesses a strong framework to address the broad scope of these challenges. The 2013 Addendum to the OSCE Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings outlined recommendations for measures to enhance the monitoring, detection, investigation and disruption of all forms of technology-facilitated trafficking and to encourage the private sector, including ICT companies and Internet service providers, to contribute to the prevention and disruption of trafficking rings.

In 2017, the OSCE took a further step with a Ministerial Decision on Strengthening Efforts to Combat all Forms of Child Trafficking, Including For Sexual Exploitation by calling on States to promote the implementation of age verification technologies with a view to limit the access of children to pornographic websites; and calling on ICT and social media companies to prevent the distribution of--and take down--child sexual abuse content online to protect children from exploitation online.

Now is the time to fulfil these commitments with strong policy development and practical implementation on the ground. This is why we are here today. Our goal is to explore opportunities and develop concrete recommendations for positive change across the OSCE region.

Your Excellencies,

Before I introduce the conference agenda, we are going to hear from our distinguished opening speakers.

First, I am pleased to welcome **Mr Rudolf Urbanovič, State Secretary of the**

Ministry of Interior of Slovakia, National Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings who will speak on behalf of the 2019 Slovak chairmanship of the OSCE. Mr State Secretary, the floor is yours.

THANK YOU, State Secretary Urbanovič.

All of the work that we do is ultimately to prevent victimization and to help those who have been harmed. In this regard, it is fundamental that our work is guided by the voice of survivors and victims of human trafficking. Our next speaker is a person we admire for her courage and determination to advocate on behalf of those who often don't have a voice. **Melanie Thompson** is a sex trafficking survivor and anti-sex trafficking advocate. Today, Melanie spreads awareness on why protecting victims of sex trafficking is so important. Dear Melanie, it is an honour to have you here with us, the floor is yours.

THANK YOU Melanie, for your bravery in standing up against a daunting challenge and bringing your crucial voice to this conference.

Our next speaker is doubtlessly familiar to many of you present today. **Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir, Director of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights** has over 35 years of leadership experience working on human rights, democratic governance and the rule of law at the international, national and local levels. Dear Director, the floor is yours.

THANK YOU Ingibjörg. I am delighted to highlight the very good cooperation we have with ODIHR and we look forward to working with you and your team on this important topic.

For our first keynote address, I am honoured to introduce **Princess Eugenie of**

York. Her Royal Highness has been engaged in the field of Modern Day Slavery since 2012. Alongside her parents, the Duke and Duchess of York, she helped set up Key To Freedom, a social enterprise initiative that gives victims of human trafficking a vocational skill, a regular income, and with that their regained independence. This led her to start a new initiative with her best friend Jules called The Anti-Slavery Collective, an independent Collective that seeks to shine a light on modern slavery as a global epidemic.

She has worked with many organisations including the UN Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women and Freedom Fund. Her most recent initiative is the speaker series ‘Tech Tackles Trafficking’ alongside CLC, The McCain Institute and Scott Prehn. The series brings together different sectors of society to discuss ways in which technology can combat Modern Slavery. Your Highness, thank you for taking the time to come to Vienna, the floor is yours.

THANK YOU, Your Highness, for your inspirational speech. We highly appreciate your commitment to combat human trafficking and to give voice to the victims harmed by it.

For our second keynote, I would like to introduce **Ambassador John Richmond**, the United States Ambassador-at-Large to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons and the Director of the U.S. Department of State’s Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons. In October 2018, the US Senate unanimously confirmed Ambassador Richmond and President Trump appointed him to lead the United States’ global engagement to combat human trafficking and support the coordination of anti-trafficking efforts across the U.S. government.

Ambassador Richmond has a distinguished career in the global battle for freedom. He co-founded the Human Trafficking Institute that exists to decimate modern slavery at its source. Prior to the Institute, Ambassador Richmond served for more than ten years as a federal prosecutor in the U.S. Department of Justice's Human Trafficking Prosecution Unit where he investigated and prosecuted numerous victim-centered labor and sex trafficking cases throughout the United States. Dear Ambassador, the floor is yours.

THANK YOU John, for your inspiring presentation and for your leadership and commitment to fight human trafficking. The OSCE looks forward to working with you and your colleagues, including on how technology can be leveraged to prevent and combat trafficking in persons.

Distinguished Participants,

Allow me now to briefly present our two-day agenda. While any discussion of combating trafficking must begin with a solid understanding of the nature of the problem, our intent in this conference was not to dwell too long on discussing the challenges, but to also look forward to solutions.

We have four panels conceived under a unified vision of positive change. The first panel will set the stage by discussing the problem—the misuse of technology—and the next three panels will discuss how technology can be an asset in the context of the OSCE's framework of prevention, protection, prosecution and partnerships.

Thus, our first panel today, entitled “**Understanding the misuse of technology to facilitate various forms of human trafficking**”, will focus on describing how technology is being misused for trafficking purposes and how it benefits

traffickers and their businesses. It will also emphasize the scope of the problem and trends relevant to the abuse of technology across different forms of trafficking, laying the groundwork for impactful solutions discussed in subsequent panels.

Tomorrow morning, our second panel “**Technology as a tool to prevent human trafficking and protect its victims**” will begin a series of discussions on the positive potential of technology. It will provide an overview of existing good practices and initiatives on harnessing technology to prevent human trafficking, including through public awareness and deterrence. It will also examine technology-based efforts to protect victims and provide a secure and safe future for vulnerable groups.

The third panel “**The power of technology to assist in the identification of victims, investigation of cases, and prosecution of perpetrators of human trafficking**” will provide an overview of existing good practices and initiatives on using technology to advance and enhance investigations and prosecutions of perpetrators. It will also examine technology-based efforts to identify victims and improve access to services.

The fourth panel is titled “**Changing the policy landscape: current and future strategic approaches to technology and human trafficking.**” It will bring together and build on the findings of the previous panels and emphasize opportunities for dynamic policy action and larger scale, market-based interventions that can impact the severe scale of human trafficking. It will also highlight the importance of partnerships and cooperative approaches as we seek to construct meaningful solutions to the problem of human trafficking.

In addition to the plenary agenda, we also want to provide an opportunity for

our partners to further explore specific topics. Therefore, four thematic sessions will take place during the lunch break tomorrow. These are designed to complement the main panel discussions and offer a deeper dive into a number of contemporary issues of technology and trafficking.

The *first side event*, organized by the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Belarus to the OSCE and the UNODC, will address the impact of digital technologies on the exploitation of children and consider ways to combat the sale of children online.

Our *second side event* organized by a coalition of business called Tech Against Trafficking will showcase a landscape analysis of existing tech tools currently being used in the anti-trafficking sector, and officially launch the next phase of TAT's efforts to support the growth and scale of these technologies.

Our *third side event*, organized by OSCE/ODIHR and TNTD, will discuss ICT tools to improve the proactive identification of victims of trafficking in human beings used by national and international law enforcement agencies, governments, corporations and civil society.

And finally, *the fourth side event* will feature a discussion by our office in partnership with the University of Nottingham and Diginex and will present the preliminary results of our forthcoming report on the role of information and communication technologies in the fight against trafficking as well as how technology helps us assess the OSCE's own supply chains.

Special thanks also go to the organizers of the event on **Harnessing Collaboration in Eradicating Human Trafficking: the Role of ICAT from Global to Local** which preceded this opening.

A few final notes. This year, you will have the chance to visit a series of displays exhibited just outside this room. The tools you'll be able to see and interact with are:

- ✓ Seattle Against Slavery - Project Intercept
- ✓ Thorn - Spotlight
- ✓ The Mekong Club - Apprise App

Moreover, we are hosting a virtual reality project from UN Women in collaboration with Google titled "Courage to Question," where you'll be able to enter into the life and story of Lydia Cacho; a human rights defender, author and journalist who has dedicated her career to investigating and exposing human trafficking, sexual violence and impunity.

I want to also note that it is not only what we talk about at this conference that matters, but also who is doing the talking (as Melanie so eloquently taught us). To this end, I would like to highlight that a majority of our speakers this year are female, on a topic where female participation can, unfortunately, often be missed. Additionally, our speakers represent numerous different sectors of the anti-trafficking response—governments, NGOs, private sector, academia, international organizations, as well as 17 countries. We hope you find this diversity fruitful and inspiring.

In this same spirit of leading by example, we were motivated to ensure that the 19th Alliance Conference is a trafficking-free event and that the services and goods contracted for this event were not made and delivered through exploitation. For the first time ever, together with our colleagues from the OSCE Procurement and Contracting Unit, we identified our conference supplies in sectors with the highest risks of exploitation – cleaning, security, travel,

catering and accommodation – and when signing contracts with these companies, we included legal provisions forbidding suppliers and their staff to engage in human trafficking, forced and child labour.

In addition we conducted a survey of these companies and we learned that all the responding companies have written contracts with workers and have a policy on human rights and prohibition of exploitation of workers. One company hires workers directly and the three other use also services of recruitment agencies. All companies know their first tier suppliers. Moreover all companies know their second tier suppliers, except one which knows its second or other level suppliers depending on the product.

We acknowledge that this due diligence exercise is a simple one and has its limitations, but for us this is very important step in practicing what we preach to ensure that we don't contribute, directly or indirectly, to exploitation of people. In your folders you will find a letter signed by me and the OSCE Head of Procurement, Mr Darko Stojmenovsky with additional information on this topic.

A final technical note:

Please note that you can register to deliver statements with our colleague, Oleksandr Kyrylenko. That said, we also encourage questions to our panellists from all participants. As always, your feedback on the organization and the content of the conference is very important to us. With this in mind, we have created an online survey that you are very welcome to complete and share with us. The link to the survey will be available on the conference web page as well as sent to you via email.

With that, I close this opening session and invite you to attend our coffee break.