

## **OSCE HUMAN DIMENSION IMPLEMENTATION MEETING 2006**

### **EU statement for the working sessions 2 and 3: Addressing factors contributing to the cycle of trafficking in persons**

**3 October, Warsaw**

Thank you, Mr. President.

I'm really glad to take the floor today, in this session specifically devoted to the hideous phenomenon of trafficking in human beings.

As we have stated many times in the last years, trafficking in persons undoubtedly represents one of the most serious violations of human rights and personal dignity in today's world: that's why we totally shared the decision to hold a special session on this very issue.

A lot has already been said about the terrible consequences of trafficking on the lives of those affected and the tremendous human rights and law enforcement challenges it represents. In this statement, therefore, I will try to limit myself only to some brief comments on the most important developments we have witnessed in the last year in this field.

The EU has always appreciated and strongly supported the activities of the OSCE in this field: last year we welcomed Ministerial Decision 13/05, which endorsed the "Addendum to the OSCE Action Plan Addressing the Special Needs of Child Victims" and entrusted the Anti-Trafficking mechanism in the Secretariat with some new tasks. The Union has also actively participated in the mechanism of the "Alliance against Trafficking" set up by the former Special Representative against trafficking in human beings, Dr Helga Konrad, in the conviction that it constitutes an instrument of crucial importance for fostering effective international cooperation in this sector. In 2006, as you all know, we have witnessed very significant changes in our Organization, regarding Anti-trafficking: the EU would like to seize this occasion to thank once again Dr Konrad for all the excellent work she has carried out during her mandate, and to confirm its support to the new mechanism on Anti-Trafficking.

In the last years, the EU has put the fight against trafficking at the top of its priorities. We have strived both to confront this problem within the EU, in our member countries, by adopting relevant documents and pieces of legislation, and to assist other countries in their own fight against it.

Various programmes financed by the EU Commission address specific problems directly connected with trafficking (to name but a few, DAPHNE on combating violence against women and children, AGIS on strengthening judicial co-operation, AENEAS on migration and asylum issues); moreover, also in our European Neighbourhood Programme we pay increasing attention to this issue, by including specific provisions regarding trafficking in the Action Plans we agree with our partners.

In our view, if we want our action to be effective, we must first of all adopt a really comprehensive approach, which takes into account all the different implications of the phenomenon and considers the cycle of trafficking in its entirety, without limiting itself to either the problems in the countries of

origin or to demand factors in destination countries. The three cornerstones that lead the EU activities in this respect are: prevention of trafficking in persons (that means addressing root causes - such as demand, poverty, lack of equal opportunities and inadequate protection of human rights - on the one hand and trying to reduce demand on the other), protection of victims, and strong prosecution of traffickers.

In December 2005, the Council of the EU has taken a fundamental step forward in the Union's strategy against trafficking, by adopting -in accordance to the provisions of "The Hague Programme on freedom, security and justice"- a specific Action Plan, containing a series of practical measures to be implemented by the Union in the near future: the new Action Plan is an extremely useful and concrete instrument, that will certainly give new impetus to the Union's efforts in this domain. At the heart of our Action Plan lies the protection of human rights. It addresses also other very important aspects: effective prosecution (to be realized through a larger involvement of Europol and the adoption of more rigid national legislations, as well as by strengthening our capacities to collect reliable data), and proper management of migration issues; it takes into account the whole cycle of trafficking (addressing the root causes of the phenomenon through specific programs to be carried out in the countries of origin, and trying to identify best practices to considerably reduce demand in the destination countries); finally, it attaches great importance also to the strengthening of international co-operation, which is crucial for an effective struggle against trafficking: the EU must take advantage of all the work done by other international Organizations (at both the UN-global and the regional level), and co-ordinate its activities with all the various Organizations and initiatives engaged in this field, first of all the Council of Europe and the OSCE (as evidence of this attention, OSCE documents, such as the National Referral Mechanism Manual, are expressly mentioned as reference sources in our Action Plan). I am happy to announce that this summer the EU Council has approved a Decision on the adoption of the additional Protocol to the UN Palermo Convention, which allows the European Community to become a Party to that important UN instrument.

The adoption of this Action Plan, which we intend to implement as quickly as possible (in addition to the other instruments that we have adopted in other fora, including OSCE decisions), testify clearly to our real and concrete will to engage ourselves deeply in the fight against trafficking of human beings. We are determined to make a difference on this phenomenon and we are sure that, by working all together, we will succeed.

In the light of the above, we would like to submit the following recommendations:

- We look forward to the appointment of a new Special Representative on trafficking in human beings. The OSCE activities against trafficking require strong guidance particularly considering the new tasks with which the Anti-trafficking Unit has been entrusted by Ministerial Decision 13/05.
- We encourage the new Special Representative to continue, with the help of the Anti Trafficking Assistance Unit and in close connection with the other relevant bodies of the OSCE, the excellent work initiated by Dr. Konrad. In our perspective, it is particularly important that the new Representative continues to attach the utmost importance to the activities of the "Alliance against Trafficking", and give them new impetus. We also encourage all the Participating States -countries of origin, transit, or destination - to co-operate fully with the new Representative.
- Co-operation with civil society is absolutely crucial in this sphere: we cannot imagine to deal with the issue of trafficking without the assistance and co-operation of relevant national and international NGOs. The Special Representative should identify best practices and provide

guidelines on how the Participating States could most effectively involve civil society in their Anti-trafficking structures and activities.

- The EU attaches particular importance also to the concrete activities and projects carried out by the OSCE on the ground; we therefore invite the OSCE Missions to intensify their activities in the field of anti-trafficking, in close co-ordination both with the OSCE Institutions and with relevant local NGOs: we consider particularly important that each Mission appoints a Focal Point on Anti-Trafficking, and that specific funds are earmarked for initiatives in this field.

Thank you, Mr. President.

The Acceding Countries Bulgaria and Romania, the Candidate Countries Turkey, Croatia <sup>1</sup> and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Montenegro, and Serbia, EFTA country Iceland, member of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine align themselves with this statement.

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<sup>1</sup> Croatia and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process