

Human trafficking –conference in Vilnius 25-26 October 2007
Closing remarks by Ambassador Timo Lahelma, Finland

Ladies and gentleman, dear colleagues,

First of all, let me thank the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, the OSCE, in particular the Office of the Special Representative for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime for organising this thought-provoking conference on preventing trafficking in human beings.

Finland has followed this conference with great interest, as in the initial preparations for the upcoming Finnish OSCE Chairmanship-in-Office 2008, the fight against trafficking in human beings **has been preliminarily identified as one of Finland's priority areas** in the OSCE Human Dimension.

Let me now turn to the discussions of this conference:

As we have discussed during these two days, trafficking in human beings is a human rights violation that can effectively be tackled only in **close cooperation between the public authorities and the private sector, including the business community, the media and NGOs**. There is an ever-increasing scope for **cooperation and coordination locally, nationally and at international level** in order to ensure that the **human rights of the trafficked** persons can be safeguarded. The phenomenon of trafficking must be seen from a truly comprehensive and cross-cutting perspective.

In this conference:

- We have learnt and shared that **awareness-raising**, including **the role of the media and educational facilities in preventing trafficking, can play a crucial role**. There is already an ample amount of educational tools and material available and it is time for us through a coordinated and cooperative approach to make best use of them.
- Through these instruments we may **target both the potential victims and the potential “demandeurs” of the trafficked**.
- Whilst **education**, including targeted human rights education, is a tool that brings results only slowly and surely, its as systematic use as possible **pays off in the long run**; its benefits cannot be measured in terms of money but rather in terms of human value.

Finally, I would like to highlight that the **OSCE Action plan of 2003 and recommendations by the Special Representative's office and through various OSCE human dimension meetings, including this one, form a solid basis for the effective work of implementation of the commitments made.** During this conference we have again repeatedly heard the all too high numbers of victims of human trafficking. It is of utmost importance that the various commitments made are being effectively implemented. Action to prevent trafficking is needed now, it cannot wait until tomorrow.

I thank you.