



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

**Report to the Permanent Council by Mr. Valiant Richey, OSCE Special Representative
and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human beings**

25 November 2021

Madam Chairperson,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

• Today, I would like to outline four major **challenges** in the global fight against trafficking in human beings, and present to you the **activities** my office and I conducted this year in response to those challenges. How we strived to tailor them to your needs, and how they fit within the mandate you gave me and within the OSCE's overall **strategy** to combat - and one day end - the scourge of human trafficking.

• The first major challenge is that traffickers still enjoy widespread "**impunity**". There are different estimates on the number of victims of trafficking in the OSCE region, but they all account for millions of people. Yet, very few see their traffickers prosecuted by the criminal justice systems of our countries. The data suggests that only one trafficker is prosecuted for every 2275 victims. Adding to that, in recent years we have registered a sharp decline in these already low numbers of prosecutions. What are we saying about justice, when 99% of victims never see it? Exploitation violates the dignity of those who suffer it, it creates trauma that can last a lifetime, and it frays the fabric of our communities. This is not only a **human rights** issue but also a **security issue**. Indeed, the **impunity** traffickers enjoy is a grave concern for the rule of law in our region, the security of our societies, and the safety of all our citizens.

• Against this backdrop, and in line with our policy to practice approach, at last year's Alliance Conference my Office launched a **comprehensive** and ambitious **strategy** that centers around increasing the number and quality of prosecutions. First, we identified shortcomings and training gaps in the area of investigating and prosecuting THB-related crimes. We analyzed the landscape of capacity building initiatives within the OSCE region, which gave us a clear understanding on what is missing and what is needed in the field. This led to the development of multiple webinar series and in-person roundtables on applying **victim-centered**, trauma-

informed, gender-sensitive and human rights-based approaches in investigation and prosecution, and on understanding the irrelevance of victims' consent in trafficking cases. We did this through effective partnerships with organizations like the International Association of Prosecutors, International Justice Mission, and Aequitas to amplify our reach and leverage our resources.

- Another prominent theme in our discussions – since the 2019 Tashkent conference and the 2020 Alliance- is the **crucial role of judges** in combating human trafficking, the need for more specialized judges, and the need for investment in training, while fully respecting judicial autonomy and independence. We are now collaborating with the International Association of Judges, the International Organization for Judicial Training and the European Judicial Training Network to develop a training module to promote integration of victim-centred and trauma-informed approaches into judicial proceedings.

- My last point on prosecution and combating impunity is on **financial investigations and engaging the financial sector**. This is an issue where my Office has been actively involved since the publication in 2019 of the first-ever compendium of resources and step-by-step guide for financial investigation frameworks. The idea is that through financial intelligence and investigations, we can better identify victims and perpetrators, enhance investigations and prosecutions with stronger evidence, undermine the profit motive of trafficking, and support victims with assets seized from traffickers. We are now bringing our research into practice through pilot projects and, next week in London, a major effort with the UK anti-slavery commissioner and the FAST initiative to bring together governments and banks to help foster the public-private partnerships that are so crucial to identify signs of trafficking and prevent illicit financial flows.

- This brings me to the second major challenge in anti-trafficking efforts today – **Protection of victims**. More specifically, how we are still not doing a good enough job at identifying and protecting victims of trafficking.

- So, what are my team and I doing about it? On **victim identification**, we continued to work in support of States to better identify victims of trafficking in mixed migration flows, a perennial and persistent challenge. I held briefings with parliamentarians (both at the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and at the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly), highlighted challenges, and encouraged the adoption of more effective policies. In March and July I held a

number of meetings (first online and then in person) with anti-trafficking authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina to support them in addressing the risks of trafficking among migrants and asylum seekers transiting through the country. Building further synergies with the OSCE PA, I was accompanied first by now-PA President Margareta Cederfelt and then by the new chair of the migration committee, Gudrun Kugler. We visited the reception centres of Borici and Lipa, spoke with local authorities and NGOs on the ground, and we produced a set of recommendations that are relevant not only for the specific case of Bosnia and Herzegovina, but really for every OSCE participating State where migrants transit.

- Also under the umbrella of Protection, we started looking deeper into the issue of “**vulnerability**”. What factors make it easier for traffickers to exploit people? What vulnerabilities expose people to trafficking?

- Trafficking in human beings is a highly **gendered crime** that affects women, men, girls, and boys in different ways. This year, we published a study on “Applying gender-sensitive approaches in combating trafficking in human beings”, offering a comprehensive account of gender-related aspects in trafficking. The paper seeks to ensure that strategies for prevention, protection, and prosecution are comprehensive and leave no victim behind, regardless of who they are or the form of exploitation they have endured. It also provides a list of recommendations for OSCE pS and the wider anti-trafficking community to enhance the development of more holistic, tailored, and gender-responsive strategies that address **gender-specific vulnerabilities** and needs of victims of trafficking. With a view to enhance the implementation of those recommendations, we are organizing a series of **sub-regional peer-to-peer events** for different parts of the OSCE region, to provide an opportunity for government officials, law enforcement practitioners, and members of civil society to discuss practical measures and best practices in applying gender-sensitive approaches in combating trafficking.

- We are now also working on an occasional paper on **national minorities** and trafficking in human beings. OSCE participating States recognized the importance of “addressing all forms of discrimination against minorities” and the value of awareness-raising campaigns targeting “the most vulnerable groups, including persons belonging to national minorities”. This joint research project, coordinated together with ODIHR, aims at offering evidence through empirical data collection that discrimination based on race and ethnicity is a vulnerability factor prior, during and after the trafficking process. It also seeks to identify effective and targeted

prevention strategies through non-discrimination and empowerment initiatives for minority groups in countries of origin, transit and destination. We aim to publish the paper by **next year's Alliance conference**, which will be devoted – I am delighted to announce – precisely to effective protection of trafficking victims.

- Another important area is our work on **trafficking in human beings for the removal of organs**. Despite its high profits and harm to victims, this form of trafficking remains one of the least understood and addressed forms of human trafficking globally and it needs urgent attention from the international community. After last year's expert convening on the matter, this year we worked together with UNODC, OHCHR, and the WHO on an Issue Brief which was published just a few weeks ago by ICAT.

- This year, we also published our study on “**Trafficking in human beings and terrorism: where and how they intersect**”. The paper explores the connections between human trafficking and terrorism by analyzing activities of terrorist groups through the lens of trafficking in human beings, including through a series of illustrative examples collected from throughout the OSCE region. The outcome is a set of targeted recommendations to support participating States in preventing the crime of trafficking by terrorist groups, holding perpetrators fully accountable, and protecting victims.

- **Prosecution and protection** are two sides of the same coin and really go hand in hand. Protection is not only an obligation related to the rights of victims, but also an effective law enforcement strategy. Likewise, prosecution is not only about enforcing the law but also an important avenue for the protection of victims' rights. Supported victims lead to stronger cases.

- We implement this comprehensive synergy in our **simulation-based training exercises**. This year, after the pause imposed in 2020 due to the pandemic, we resumed our international exercises. The simulation is about fostering multi-agency cooperation as well as promoting the approaches highlighted by the OSCE, including victim-centered investigation and prosecution. And States are increasingly adopting this methodology and incorporating it in their capacity-building frameworks. In 2021 alone, we supported - together with our crucial partners in the field operations - **national simulations** in Albania, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Ukraine. Now, it is time for the project to move to the next level. Instead of bringing “the world to Vicenza”, we want to bring “Vicenza to the world” – we will support States in incorporating

the crucial elements of our methodology into their training curricula and thereby strengthen the **sustainability** of capacity building across the region.

- And here I come to the third major challenge in anti-trafficking today, **the scale of the problem**, and the degree to which it is interwoven into our society. While prosecution and protection are fundamental and necessary components of our efforts to combat trafficking in human beings, if we are going to end human trafficking it will ultimately be because we have devoted the right attention and resources to prevention. Which is why this year's Alliance Conference was devoted to **discouraging the demand** that fosters exploitation.

- At its core, trafficking in human beings is a **financially motivated crime**. Poverty and injustice alone do not cause trafficking. The traffickers' desire for money does, or rather more specifically – the trafficker's knowledge that the fruits of exploitation can be sold into the mainstream economy. Individuals, businesses, and even governments are paying, knowingly or unknowingly, for goods and services extracted from trafficking victims. Traffickers profits increased five-fold in the last 15 years to \$150 billion per year. While these profits are paid to traffickers, they are paid by all of us. Our purchases and choices create a demand - a market force - that motivates this crime. It is time to confront the source of the money that is fueling trafficking. That is to say that we need to **stop paying for trafficking**.

- On the labour exploitation side, there are promising examples across our region, many of them very recently adopted, including policies and laws that establish protective measures, foster transparency, and require monitoring to ensure enforcement. My office continued supporting States' efforts on this, for example with a regional workshop in Belgrade, with thematic briefings with the US Department of Labour, and through roundtable discussions with the private sector and policy makers in London and Paris, not to mention the fascinating, OSCE-wide conversation we held in the context of the 2021 OSCE Mediterranean Conference just a few weeks ago. Next year we aim to further **support the political momentum** growing for these approaches in the OSCE area with an event specifically tailored for parliamentarians, which we are organizing with the OSCE PA.

We also continue working inside the OSCE, looking at our own supply chains and **procurement**. This year we further operationalized our vision, with specific guidance and a training module for our procurement officials across the OSCE to ensure we “walk the walk” and lead by example. And we continue to bring our experience at a broader level to the UN

where we co-chair the Task Force mandated by the UN High-Level Committee on Management to develop a common approach to this issue. This year, we also published with ICAT an Issue Brief on the topic to provide policy guidance for the anti-trafficking field in parallel to the more operational work we conduct in the Task Force.

- When it comes to trafficking for the purpose of **sexual exploitation**, the approach is similar – not paying for trafficking. So we need to ask ourselves: “what steps can we take to stop men from buying sex from trafficking victims?” This is a demand overwhelmingly created by men, and whose price is disproportionately paid by women and girls. It is time to address our passive acceptance or willful ignorance of the huge market for sexual exploitation worldwide: nearly \$100 billion a year comes from sexual exploitation. We are talking about **2,000 transactions a minute** with trafficking victims - with women and girls (and men and boys) who – by definition - did not choose to be there. These are transactions that not only fuel exploitation but *are* exploitation. This very simply has to stop. This year, we published a first of its kind paper on discouraging the demand that fosters trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation, presenting the international legal obligations and the strategic value for addressing demand, as well as some of the best ways for States to accomplish that.

- Linked to the “scale” problem, we also need to counter more effectively **technology-facilitated trafficking**. The intersection of technology and trafficking is one of the defining topics of the current, global conversation on efforts to end human trafficking. Indeed, the future success of countries in eradicating human trafficking will very much depend on how they are prepared to counter the misuse of technology and online platforms. To support OSCE action, my Office is publishing in the coming weeks a **detailed policy analysis** for governments to curb technology-facilitated trafficking, and to effectively address the online platforms across the OSCE that promote, facilitate or host exploitative material with impunity. I know that a number of your legislative bodies are looking at this very issue right now because we have been in touch with them. I am confident our output arrives at just the right moment in this broad conversation. The issue with technology shows us how trafficking in human beings is a great example of why we need **effective multilateralism**: large, complex and common problems are better tackled together, with common strategies and approaches.

- The fourth major challenge in anti-trafficking efforts today, and the one that really sums it all up, is **the need for political will**. This means granting the necessary resources for law enforcement, prosecution and judiciary bodies to carry out their tasks; it means adequately

funding identification, protection and assistance programmes to victims; and it means investing in prevention efforts commensurate to the scale of the problem.

- One of the main tools I have to foster political will and support your national authorities are my official visits. This year I conducted full-fledged country visits to France and Bulgaria, and other official visits to Spain, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the United Kingdom, Serbia and Liechtenstein. Let me take this opportunity to thank the authorities of all the mentioned countries for their openness and positive engagement. These visits offer a unique opportunity to **provide advice and expertise**, exchange good practices and consult relevant legislative, judicial, and executive authorities in a spirit of co-operation, as well as to **raise the political profile** of anti-trafficking efforts in any given country - all core aspects of my mandate.

- Another way to foster political will is through **partnership**. The dual role of OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator you granted me carries the responsibility of advancing partnerships, co-ordination, and co-operation, both inward (leveraging the great expertise and capacity across OSCE executive structures) and outward (with other International Organizations, NGOs, Academia and the private sector. I see partnerships as a "**force multiplier**" to advance our goals and trigger interventions adapted to the scale of the issue.

- I already mentioned part of our work with **ICAT** this year, which ensured once again that OSCE anti-trafficking initiatives are elevated to a global stage. Likewise, our co-operation with the **Council of Europe** remained instrumental to develop complementary lines of action and to coordinate our efforts, including with the recent gathering of anti-trafficking representatives from all 57 pS. Our cooperation with the **European Union** has also strengthened, in particular through our contribution to their new anti-trafficking strategy, and now also to a possible new anti-trafficking directive. Finally, we have further intensified our exchanges with the CTHB focal points across **OSCE Executive Structures**. These contacts are instrumental both in our respective strategic planning and budget preparations for 2022, as well as to inform the development of concrete activities, from national simulations to workshops or full-fledged conferences.

Ladies and gentlemen,

- In conclusion, I would like to extend my thanks to **our donors** for extra-budgetary project contributions in 2021, in particular the governments of Andorra, Austria, Cyprus, France,

Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Monaco, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Japan. And special thanks also to Italy, Germany and the United States of America for **seconding staff** to my Office: your support is very much appreciated and crucial for our success.

- I would also like to express my deep and sincere appreciation to the **Chair in Office**, and to Amb. Funered in particular for her consistent support to our work, as well as to Amb. Ekstedt for her contribution to the Alliance. Similarly, let me thank the Secretary General, for keeping CTHB as a top priority in her advocacy efforts. I also thank the incoming **Polish Chair** for their engagement on the trafficking issue this year within the context of the Mediterranean Conference. I look forward to working with you next year.

- Over the past couple of years, I met with Ministers and Parliaments, with NGOs and companies, with victims and service providers, with prosecutors and technology developers. **The picture is rather dark** – trafficking has never been so intertwined with our societies and economy as it is today. It is hidden deep in supply chains and in plain sight in our communities and in the digital sphere. Yet, I see today examples of new and unprecedented levels of attention among political leaders across the OSCE region. **Something is changing**. We used to think of trafficking only as a crime like any other crime, but increasingly we see it as a broader societal problem, as everyone's problem and this is reflected in evolving strategies and actions. I believe we stand at a unique moment in time. A time when building safer and more resilient societies and economies, finally free from exploitation, is attainable. Human trafficking remains an open wound in our world. But if we prioritize the necessary political and financial resources to seriously combat it, and if we adopt the right strategies, we can contemplate *ending* it. It is not only possible, but necessary, to finally provide justice and freedom to the millions in our region who still enjoy neither.

- I thank you for your kind attention, commitment and support.