

Speech delivered by Oskaras Jusys, Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania

Your Excellency Minister,
Dear Special Representative,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to greet all of you in Vilnius conference „Trafficking in Human Beings: Challenges and Solutions“. This Conference is organized with international partners – OSCE and UN. A special thank I would like to address to OSCE Special Representative Ms. Eva Biaudet and her office personnel for cooperation in organizing this event.

This Conference is one of the United Nations regional initiatives in fighting against human trafficking (UN. GIFT). We hope, that it will contribute to a constructive regional experts' preparation for Vienna Forum on 13 – 15 February, 2008 and will echo in the global context as well.

Trafficking in human beings is not only a challenge for national governments or regional co-operation. This is a very serious global problem, relating to the protection of fundamental human rights and freedoms. Although human trafficking is coped in many ways and methods, this problem becomes more and more complex. Human trafficking gains new forms, thus solely national governments' efforts are not enough. Moreover, people involved into human trafficking business are very flexible and able to adapt even to a rapid change of circumstances. That is why it is crucial finding new forms to combat human trafficking.

For many years Lithuania is coping with trafficking in human beings phenomenon. Already the second governmental programme is implemented. Not to make this statement one-sided, I would like to remind, that according to the United States evaluation, Lithuania is in the very first group of the states combating human trafficking in respect of the efforts undertaken. Nonetheless, together with the national efforts, well co-ordinated international action must be taken. All human trafficking fighters should complement and not duplicate each other.

In the context of international actions, I would like to stress the importance of constructive co-operation with such partners as media, educational institutions and business community. In this particular context we are more likely to name them as “new partners”, but this interpretation might be a little bit confusing. They are able to foresee human trafficking problem and understand its dangers, what challenges some of them to join general fight against trafficking in human beings. Also, we understand how big input do they have for community opinion and how much unused potential is hidden there. A space for action is remarkable. For example, during one of the polls in Lithuania it was questioned how do the victims become involved into human trafficking crimes. More than 10 percent replied that it was simply interesting for them. Thus, is it not a space for media to interrupt and dispel such myths? For a long time governmental institutions work

hard on these issues, but we must use all possible methods and opportunities. This is what we expect to discuss during the Conference.

Governmental institutions have deep co-operational bonds in fighting against human trafficking. We may enjoy the results achieved in the Baltic Sea region. But it is the time for much wider international co-operation and it should be stimulated continuously. Therefore I would see one more aim of this Conference – the enhanced intercommunication.

At the end of my speech, I would like to wish everyone a constructive work and innovative ideas.