

**PREVENTING TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS:
THE NEXUS BETWEEN ECONOMICS AND HUMAN RIGHTS PROTECTION**

*Statement prepared by Jyothi Kanics
for the preparatory seminar for the OSCE Economic Forum
Ioannina, 17-18 February 2003*

Preventing and combating trafficking in human beings is a complex endeavor, which demands a comprehensive, multi-disciplinary response. The OSCE considers this challenge as a priority because trafficking cuts across all dimensions of the OSCE's work. As highlighted in the OSCE's Anti-Trafficking Guidelines:

As an element of the *economic dimension*, trafficking exists largely because of economic and social inequalities between, and within, countries. High rates of poverty, unemployment, low pay, and discriminatory labour practices all contribute to its spread. Increased trafficking is associated also with the dislocations resulting from economic transition, particularly the increased feminisation of poverty.

OSCE participating States have made a variety of commitments in the economic sphere, which, if fulfilled, will greatly contribute to efforts to combat trafficking. For instance, in the Charter for European Security adopted in Istanbul in 1999, it was stressed that "acute economic problems and environmental degradation may have serious implications for our security" and that "co-operation in the fields of economy, science and technology and the environment will be of critical importance." With this in mind, OSCE participating States committed themselves to "strengthen our responses to such threats through continued economic and environmental reforms, by stable and transparent frameworks for economic activity and by promoting market economies, while paying attention to economic and social rights."

What I would like to emphasize today is that our OSCE commitments not only call upon us to promote and to protect economic and social rights in the transition to market economies, but that the commitments we have in this field apply to ALL OSCE participating States and that prioritizing these rights is crucial to preventing trafficking in human beings.

In this regard, we must first analyze and get a better understanding of the economic realities and labour conditions in both countries of origin and countries of destination, with a particular focus on informal labour markets as well as on criminal activities, which undermine our economies.

Secondly, we must raise awareness of these challenges and work to deepen our commitments, especially the right of everyone to the enjoyment of just and favorable working conditions including equal opportunity, fair wages and safe and healthy working conditions.

It is with these aims in mind that the ODIHR, in co-operation with the International Labour Organization, is planning a conference later this year, which will focus on the establishment and monitoring of human rights standards in unprotected labour markets. It is envisioned that the results and recommendations from this conference will feed into this year's special session at the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting focusing on protecting the rights of migrant workers.

These activities will build on the previous advocacy and project work of the ODIHR, most notably the Berlin Conference, which focused on the need for a more effective human rights based response in countries of destination.

Furthermore, recent recommendations from the UNHCHR should also be considered such as "examining ways of increasing opportunities for legal, gainful and non-exploitative labour migration," as well as "the promotion of labour migration by the state should be dependent on the existence of regulatory and supervisory mechanisms to protect the rights of migrant workers."

Such measures will not only promote and protect human rights, but will also have an impact on creating a healthy economy and on addressing the root causes of trafficking in human beings. Thank you.