

ADDRESS BY AMBASSADOR STOUDMANN, DIRECTOR OF THE ODIHR TO THE TRAFFICKING TASK FORCE MEETING

Vienna, 27 April 2001

1. During the first months of its existence this Task Force has concentrated its efforts on raising awareness on the issue of trafficking, and, through the identification of areas for urgent action, establishing the basis for a multiyear action plan. Thanks to multiple visits and efforts by the co-ordinator Helga Konrad, the issue of trafficking is today on the agenda of the States of the region and a network of national co-ordinators as well as national action plans are being established. Ms. Helga Konrad will tell in more detail where we were, what has been achieved, and where we should be going to.
2. But let me say that what has been done up to this day is just preparing the ground; the challenge ahead is now to “take off” and start addressing the problems professionally and convincingly. This can be done only with the determined support of the participating States and the Stability Pact Secretariat. What is now needed are deeds, not words.
3. I have some concerns in this respect, which I will share with you now.
 - 3.1 The **credibility of the Task Force** is not solidly established yet. It desperately lacks both human and financial resources to be able to provide efficient co-ordination and assistance to a variety of partners, but in particular to monitor the implementation of the programme of action. A core team of specialists is therefore urgently needed, otherwise this Task Force will become yet another Stability Pact “talk shop” and a useless exercise. This would be a shame!
 - 3.2 The **implementing agencies** for this action plan will have to prove that they have both the capabilities and the expertise on the ground to implement their projects convincingly, in co-ordination with other actors, and that they bring added value to the process.
 - 3.3 This **plan of action** is worth supporting, in particular the projects identified as priorities and I do hope for pledges soon. However, these projects remain of a general nature, they will address issues which are essential from the human rights point of view, but are nevertheless “soft issues”. The Task Force cannot do better at this stage, but it is the responsibility of the participating States and the Stability Pact co-ordinator to start addressing “hard issues” as well, such as repression of organized crime and the socio-economic aspects of the problem.
 - 3.4 The **States of the region** have to show more determination in fighting trafficking, which is very often a microcosm of the challenges and problems

that transition countries are facing. How many traffickers have been arrested and sentenced lately in the region? How many networks have been dismantled? Surely with corruption spreading from the law enforcement bodies to the judicial system, efficient action is probably wishful thinking. But there must be more commitment than lip service!

- 3.5 The **international organizations** including the OSCE field missions and the agencies having law enforcement responsibilities are already addressing the problem. But they must improve their co-operation, in theatre, amongst themselves and between the law enforcement agencies and human rights agencies. Action from international peacekeepers must take place within a comprehensive strategy and within a legal framework where all are involved with their respective specialization.

It is unfortunate that some of the most acute situations are to be found in places under international supervision. I am afraid that the international community is also part of the problem and, possibly, in some cases not only as consumers. International organizations, including the OSCE, must implement very strong policies, which have to be open and monitored (meaning that action must be taken and investigation conducted when necessary). I am afraid that here again there is too often just lip service.

- 3.6 Last but not least the **International Community** has to show its determination in fighting trafficking and in supporting the Task Force. Secondment of a core staff of specialists is urgent. Financing of Task Force activities, financing of priority projects are urgent as well. Today, ODIHR activities related to trafficking, through the Task Force and beyond, are possible only thanks to a very small handful of supporting countries. It is time for everyone to understand, in each capital, that trafficking should not be seen only through the narrow lens of the sex industry: it reflects the expansion and influence of organized crime in South-Eastern Europe and beyond, with its consequences on European integration and free movement of persons and goods, illegal migration, the future implementation of the Schengen Agreement in candidate States, the increase of corruption and the almost impossible task of achieving good governance in such an environment.