



United States Mission to the OSCE

Session 6

Humanitarian issues and other commitments I: Combating trafficking in human beings Implementation of the OSCE Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings

Delivered by U.S. Head of Delegation J. Brian Atwood
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The United States welcomes Ambassador Madina Jarbussynova, the new Special Representative and Coordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings. We look forward to working with you. We strongly support the OSCE commitments to combat trafficking in persons through prosecution, protection, and prevention—as reflected in the goals of the OSCE Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings and the new Addendum to the Action Plan, completed in December 2013 in Kyiv. These commitments establish not only the basics of what each country should do to fight trafficking, but also highlight the strategies that have been most successful.

Over the last decade, traffickers have become more sophisticated, but OSCE participating states have also become more strategic. The tools and strategies to fight trafficking are available; we have only to use them. In excellent news for OSCE countries in Europe, trafficking convictions in 2013 increased 48% (to 2,684) over the previous year, including an increase in convictions for labor trafficking. This is remarkable progress. In the United States, we also saw a marked increase in trafficking convictions. In addition, many OSCE countries in Europe created new or amended old trafficking laws, achieving the highest number on record (35).

European OSCE countries led the world in victim identification in 2013. Numbers were not as good as 2012 (down 14%) but strong overall, with some exceptions. **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, after a remarkable anti-trafficking transformation since 2003, appears to have regressed with respect to victim identification. To be clear: identifying trafficking victims within a country is a success in and of itself. All countries have trafficking victims; but it is the countries with successful anti-trafficking investigations and education that find and assist the victims.

Albania increased victim identification in 2013 and appointed a new national anti-trafficking coordinator, who is already working to improve cooperation between the entities required to turn victim identification into a successful prosecution—police, prosecutors, and judges.

In 2013, **Uzbekistan** took the commendable step of inviting the International Labor Organization to monitor its cotton harvest under the ILO Convention of the Worst Forms of Child Labor (No. 182, 1999). It has also committed to working with the ILO in the future to eliminate state-sponsored forced and child labor. While this is important progress, Uzbekistan still has much work to do to eliminate completely all forced labor of adults and children within its borders.

Russia continues to make efforts to provide trafficking victim assistance. Some victims were identified and given assistance on an ad hoc basis and an international organization opened a trafficking shelter last year in space provided by a municipal government in St. Petersburg.

Those who face extreme economic marginalization are inevitably vulnerable to trafficking. In the last year, several of the 25 OSCE participating States with Romani victims of human trafficking made concerted efforts to prevent trafficking of this highly vulnerable community. **Bulgaria** should be commended for its public awareness efforts in Roma communities. **Kosovo** also created radio, TV, and print materials in the Roma language. **Serbia** significantly increased funding for its center for victim protection and in coordination with NGOs, trained 40 local Roma females between 13 and 19 years old to become peer educators. **Slovakia** began trafficking training for 300 police community specialists and social workers who work in marginalized communities on trafficking and other issues. Slovakia's Ministry of the Interior, along with Slovak NGOs and partners in the United Kingdom also launched an intervention project aimed at preventing the trafficking for forced labor of Slovak Roma in Glasgow, Scotland. We welcome these efforts to prevent trafficking of Roma, and urge additional action to address the root cause of this vulnerability, including by addressing employment discrimination and school segregation.

In December 2013, the **UK** government published a draft Modern Day Slavery Bill to integrate a variety of criminal offenses that are currently used to prosecute traffickers into one parliamentary bill, to make prosecution easier and increase sentencing for trafficking offenses; the draft bill is pending review. The UK government has also taken a comprehensive approach to combat child sexual exploitation in light of the recently-released report on sexual abuse and sex trafficking in the city of Rotherham over the last 20 years. We commend officials for their commitment to investigate further child sexual exploitation in the United Kingdom.

Switzerland passed a decree prohibiting the prostitution of all minors nationwide, and Swiss authorities convicted a higher number of traffickers in 2013, while courts increasingly issued prison sentences reflecting the severity of the crime. In addition, the government launched its first-ever nationwide awareness campaign.

Of concern for the whole OSCE region is the problem of child sex tourism, in which an individual from one country travels to another country for the purpose of engaging in commercial sexual activity with a child. The 2014 Trafficking in Persons report noted 21 participating or partner OSCE States from which sex tourists travel abroad, and 53 destination countries for exploitation, including eight participating or partner States. It is deeply regrettable that the United States is one of the main countries of origin for those engaged in this criminal abuse. To address this problem, we are taking the lead on an international cooperative alert system that will alert destination countries in advance that individuals may be traveling there for purposes of engaging in child sex tourism.

The United States commends the Swiss Chairmanship for its efforts to coordinate with other European bodies, such as the Council of Europe, in the effort to maximize current overlapping frameworks to fight human trafficking, such as the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Human Trafficking and the OSCE Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings.