



Deutschland 2016

Conference

“Preventing Trafficking in Human Beings  
for Labour Exploitation in Supply Chains”

**Speech by the Special Representative for the  
German OSCE Chairmanship 2016  
Dr. Gernot Erler**

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Federal Foreign Office, Berlin

Dear Ambassador Jarbussynova,  
liebe Yasmin Fahimi,  
dear Dr. Felmberg,  
dear Mr. Chibebe,  
dear Mr. Hemingway,  
dear Ms. Snežana Samardžić-Marković,  
dear Dr. Yigitgüden,  
ladies and Gentlemen,

welcome here today in the Federal Foreign Office for this conference on "Preventing Trafficking in Human Beings for Labour Exploitation in Supply Chains".

As we hope you have heard, last week Germany as this year's Chairmanship in the OSCE invited to an informal meeting in Potsdam, where the 57 OSCE participating States discussed new challenges to security and co-operation in the OSCE area and ways to strengthen the organisation to address these challenges.

As you also might have heard, the meeting in Potsdam was accompanied by protest from different political groups who criticised the OSCE for supporting – or at least not preventing – at the same time war and the proliferation of weapons, exploitation and poverty, or the suppression of free speech and other basic human rights in its participating states and elsewhere in the world.

While I don't think it is fair to make especially the OSCE responsible for these grievances, we appreciate of course growing public attention for the work of the OSCE and for our Chairmanship.

Nevertheless there are two things in a sense right about this criticism:

The first is that the OSCE is in fact one of the few international organisations whose comprehensive concept of security includes at the same time aspects of military security, economic prosperity, and human rights, fundamental freedoms and democratic standards.

And while this concept was already developed and promoted in the 1970s by the CSCE, the OSCE's predecessor organisation, its potential and strength have become apparent especially in the decades after the end of the Cold War.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

we are facing numerous new challenges to our common security, which transcend borders and demand an internationally coordinated answer on different levels, an answer as complex as the challenges we are facing and including as many relevant actors as possible.

Trafficking in human beings is one of these challenges and also here the OSCE was one of the pioneers and committed facilitators of an internationally coordinated approach. Already in 2003, the organization set up the office and post of Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings to help participating States develop and implement effective policies.

With Ambassador Jarbussynova we have a dedicated Special Representative who reminds us constantly that our ambitions in preventing this inhuman and criminal practice cannot be too high – and I want to take this opportunity to thank Ms. Jarbussynova and her team for their restless work and forward-looking initiatives, which have brought us all here today.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

this is where I would accept criticism: that we have still not done enough in preventing trafficking in human beings and that we have to realise that the urgency of this matter is growing with the rising number of refugees and migrants who often belong to the weakest of the weak and therefore become preferred victims of exploitation by human traffickers.

As I have mentioned, here as with other challenges we need a multi-level and a multi-actor approach. And bringing different actors together to mobilise their full potential and their experiences to facilitate concrete answers has always been part of the OSCE's method.

These actors are on the one hand the participating States themselves. Germany in recent years has established various instruments against trafficking in human beings – from the "National Working Group on Human Trafficking" over the hotline on "Violence against Women" to the network of Federal Police liaison officers along the main trafficking routes to Germany.

And we have taken up the initiative to further the implementation of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights by drawing up an ambitious National Action Plan on this topic. To reach this aim we started an inclusive consultation process with the participation of all relevant stakeholders and we envisage to pass this action plan in Federal Cabinet during this year and start with implementation in 2017.

Also on an international level Germany has been and will be supporting all effective efforts to combat trafficking in human beings. In June this year we sponsored a resolution in the UN Human Rights Council on combating human trafficking and we have always been a staunch supporter of the UN Trust Fund for Victims of Contemporary Forms of Slavery.

As this year's Chairmanship in the OSCE we encourage all participating States to adopt similar legislation and policies especially in public procurement and transparency, based on already existing good practices and we will use the OSCE's Economic and Environmental Forum in Prague next week to underline the importance of social and labor standards in supply chains as one part of our main focus in the OSCE's second dimension "good governance".

Ladies and Gentlemen,

with the number of vulnerable human beings on migration routes and in the countries of arrival rising, we have to expand our instruments and co-operations further. This is why I am especially welcoming today to this conference the representatives of private enterprises from so many countries.

Strengthening the participation of the business community in our efforts for security and cooperation in the OSCE area has been one priority of our OSCE Chairmanship this year. Therefore we invited private business, experts and representatives of the OSCE's participating States for the first time together to a major conference on "Connectivity for Commerce and Investment" this May in Berlin.

The representatives of the private sector encouraged the participating States at this conference to solve their political conflicts, which are preventing the huge OSCE area from growing together economically as well.

And they are right – to come closer to this vision we have to renew dialogue, trust and co-operation between the OSCE's participating States.

But we also have to prove that stronger economic connectivity will not leave the poorest of the poor more vulnerable to exploitation.

This is where we all – as governments, international organisations, trade unions, private enterprises and consumers have to do more.

Let us prove our critics wrong that international co-operation and increased economic connectivity cannot do both: fostering growth, stability and respect for the rights of human beings at the same time. I think that this conference can be an important contribution to this goal.

Thank you very much.