

STATEMENT

**by Mr. Bahodir Abduvaliev, Acting Deputy Department Head
of the General Prosecutor of the Republic of Uzbekistan
at the OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting
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Combating Trafficking in Persons

To date, human trafficking is a deeply criminalized phenomenon, which covers all regions and countries of the world, and it contributes to social stratification, brings human suffering and in some cases depriving them of life, adversely affects labor markets causing irreversible damage to human resources.

The above problem is relatively new for the Republic of Uzbekistan, but despite this within a short period its solution set at the government level.

Republic of Uzbekistan takes necessary measures to prevent crimes related to human trafficking. In this respect established the appropriate regulatory framework. Uzbekistan joined more than 60 international acts and became a member of the six major international treaties of the UN in this direction.

In 2003, Uzbekistan ratified the Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others dated December 2, 1949 and the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime of November 15, 2000. The Palermo Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime was ratified on July 8, 2008.

In addition, Uzbekistan signed the bilateral agreements and treaties, including 30 - on cooperation to combat serious forms of organized crime, including trafficking in human beings, 17 - on legal assistance and legal relations regarding civil, family and criminal cases, and 7 – on extradition.

Uzbekistan has been conducting purposeful activities to improve the national legislation to combat human trafficking.

As such, on April 17, 2008 was adopted the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan “On Combating Trafficking in Human Beings”, in which the concept of “human trafficking” is set out in accordance with the definition given in the Article 3 of the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children supplementing the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.

The Law defines public authorities directly involved in activities to combat human trafficking: Ministry of Internal Affairs, National Security Service, Ministries of Health and of Foreign Affairs, diplomatic missions and consular offices of the Republic of Uzbekistan abroad.

Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan of July 8, 2008 “On measures to improve the effectiveness of the fight against human trafficking”

approved the National Plan of Actions on improvement of efficiency of combating trafficking in human beings for 2008-2010.

In order to coordinate activities of the agencies directly carrying out such activity, the decree established **the National Interdepartmental Commission for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings** (hereinafter Interdepartmental Commission), which incorporates the heads of the government agencies and public organizations including:

ministries of Interior and Foreign Affairs, Justice, Economy, Finance, Health, Labour and Social Welfare, the National Security Service, the State Customs Committee, the Women's Committee, the National Human Rights Centre, the Authorised Commissioner for Human Rights of the Oliy Majlis (Ombudsman), the "Mahalla" Fund, the Central Council of the Public Youth Movement "Kamolot", Public Centre "Ijtimoiy Fikr".

Among the main tasks of the Interdepartmental Commission are:

coordination of activities of the government bodies, citizens' self-governance bodies and NGOs in the field of combating trafficking in human beings;

arrangement of activities aimed at improving the efficiency of efforts to identify and remove the causes and conditions conducive to trafficking in persons;

gathering and analysis of information on the scale, status and trends of trafficking in persons;

coordination of activities of the territorial interdepartmental commissions;

development of proposals for improving the activities on assistance and protection of victims of trafficking;

development of proposals for improvement of the legislation on combating trafficking in human beings;

organization of events to raise public awareness on issues of combating trafficking in human beings;

directing and monitoring of activities of the specialized agencies assisting and protecting victims of trafficking.

Given the coordinating role of the public prosecution in fighting crime, the Prosecutor-General of the Republic of Uzbekistan was appointed as the chairman of the Interdepartmental Commission.

Within the Interdepartmental Commission established a permanent analytical working group composed of the representatives of the Prosecutor General's Office, the State Customs Committee, ministries of the Interior and Justice and others with laying on it the tasks of analysis of the situation in the field of human trafficking and of the conducive causes, as well as the development of specific proposals aimed at achieving maximum efficiency in this activity.

In the system of the National Interdepartmental Commission were established 14 territorial commissions at the regional level, 195 city and district commissions.

In pursuance of the plan of the National Interdepartmental Commission, analytical working group has conducted monitoring of the 88 district, city and regional commissions to combat human trafficking, including all regional, city and district units of the agencies that are part of the National Interdepartmental Commission on the effectiveness of conducted activities.

Results of the monitoring have been discussed at the meetings of the regional commissions and the National Interdepartmental Commission with involvement of wide publicity.

Meetings of the territorial interdepartmental commissions are held in all districts, cities and regions in a systematic manner.

During this period, the above commissions based upon the results of monitoring, compilation, and analysis of conducted measures held in total 1462 meetings.

As part of the improvement of legislation in the field of combating trafficking in human beings, on September 16, 2008 was approved the Law “On amendments and additions to the Criminal Code of the Republic of Uzbekistan”.

The Law renamed the previously valid Article 135 of the Criminal Code “Recruitment of persons for exploitation” into “Human trafficking” and considerably toughened the punishment for this crime, and as a result, the human trafficking committed at aggravating circumstances **categorized as grave and very grave crimes.**

So, if the sanction of previously existing Article 135 of the Criminal Code for the recruitment of persons for exploitation committed under aggravating circumstances was provided a maximum penalty of eight years of imprisonment, now the penalty for trafficking in aggravating circumstances **is imprisonment for up to twelve years.**

Republic of Uzbekistan is taking all necessary **measures to prevent crime related to human trafficking.**

The law enforcement agencies of the country pay special attention to the study of international experience in combating this type of crime.

“Ijtimoiy Fikr (Public Opinion)” Centre conducts sociological surveys of citizens on the theme “Migration processes and combating trafficking in human beings” and “Combating human trafficking in the mirror of public opinion” on the subject of awareness and attitude to the crimes in the field of human trafficking.

The surveys showed that 97.8 percent of respondents are at sufficient level aware of the crimes committed in the field of trafficking in human beings and their serious consequences.

According to results of the research, as well as on the basis of practical activities of the bodies authorized to implement measures to combat trafficking in human beings, at the meetings of the Interdepartmental Commission discussed the problematic issues, and on the basis of results are set specific tasks to achieve efficiency in combating this type of crime.

In combating human trafficking a particular significance takes a **wide range of outreach activities** on the threat and consequences of this crime carried out among the population, especially among young people, a warning of citizens on the situation and improving their awareness. While arranging activities in this direction, special attention is on the conduct of advocacy by all ministries and agencies included in the National Interdepartmental Commission.

As part of implementation of the National Plan conducted more than 330,000 propagandistic activities, 15,000 of which make speeches in the media.

For example, the Public Fund “Mahalla” and its field offices in this direction carried out more than 32,000 events, which were attended by more than 1,585,000 citizens.

In addition, at the initiative of the National Interdepartmental Commission on the radio station “Ekho Doliny (Echo of the Valley)” held the radio projects on the theme: “Human trafficking is a universal problem of mankind”.

In order to prevent and conduct the precaution measures on crimes related to trafficking in human beings, as well as inform the public about the negative consequences of human trafficking, at the initiative and support of the Commission was shot and repeatedly shown on the central TV a film “Uqubat (Suffering)”.

The National Theatre of the Republic of Uzbekistan delivered performances titled “Tortadurman zhabrini (I will sustain a loss)”, “Ogoh buling odamlar (Be aware, people)” and “Oydin”. In addition, the staging performances were organized not only in Tashkent city, but in all regions and the Republic of Karakalpakstan, including tours to remote cities and districts of the country.

In order to increase a legal awareness of citizens on this aspect, were published and distributed more than 1.1 million user-friendly training, methodological manuals, booklets, posters, 1284 banners warning about the threat and consequences of human trafficking, which were installed in densely populated areas, the stations of road, railway and air transport.

Through the “Unitel” and “Ucell” mobile operators were delivered SMS messages warning the subscribers on crimes related to human trafficking.

In addition, the National Interdepartmental Commission developed and distributed for practical use the methodological manual for teaching staff of the educational institutions on the theme: “Actual tasks of combating trafficking and explanation of the legal basis of working abroad to the young people”.

At the initiative of the National Interdepartmental Commission in the curricula of schools, lyceums, colleges and higher education institutions was included the additional training on this subject.

Moreover, the public authorities take all necessary **measures to return the victims of trafficking** to their homeland. On this aspect, they are assisted by the law enforcement agencies of foreign countries, as well as the consular services of the embassies of the Republic of Uzbekistan in the countries of residence of the victims.

Law enforcement agencies of the Republic of Uzbekistan are in close contact with the project coordinators of the UNODC and the OSCE, which assist in identifying the location of the Uzbek citizens and their return to the homeland.

In meanwhile, based upon the results of preliminary investigation and of considering criminal cases in the courts, the accused persons were charged with the benefit of victims of trafficking the damage suffered as a result of crime.

In 2013, the courts of civil jurisdiction reviewed claims for compensation of material and moral damages suffered as a result of crimes related to trafficking in persons in the amount of 116 million soums and claims were fully satisfied.

Uzbekistan pays special attention to **the social rehabilitation and the legal protection of victims of trafficking**, the provision of psychological, medical, professional assistance, job placement and other issues of social protection.

Thus, the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan “On Establishment of the National Rehabilitation Centre for Assistance and Protection of Victims of Human Trafficking” of November 5, 2008, established **the rehabilitation centre** at the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population in Tashkent, which was put in operation on November 18, 2009.

The Centre is guided with the principles of non-discrimination of the victims of trafficking, privacy, the need to provide social and legal support, as well as personal care for victims of trafficking.

Currently, this facility is staffed with qualified specialists and physicians (psychologist, neurologist, internist, gynecologist and others). Victims of trafficking have all conditions for residence and receiving necessary medical, psychological, legal and other assistance.

It should be noted that this centre, which has 30 beds, provided in 2009-2013 the medical, psychological and social assistance to 1,236 victims of trafficking (2013 - 338).

The Centre operates on funds allocated from the state budget.

In 2013, 924 victims of trafficking have undergone medical examination. Activities have been conducted on their outpatient and inpatient treatment. In addition, they received medical treatment in the clinics of their residence.

At the same time, last year the citizens’ self-governance bodies provided to the victims of trafficking financial assistance exceeding 50.0 million soums.

In addition, to identify and arrest the members of criminal groups, who committed crimes related to trafficking in human beings and who are abroad, widely used the channels of the National Bureau of Interpol.

Thus, during passed period of 2014, in order to establish the whereabouts of abscond criminals abroad, 82 initiative tasks were sent to the National Bureau of Interpol.