

DELEGATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA

Statement at Working Session 3
Addressing factors contributing to the cycle of trafficking in persons
of the OSCE 2006 Human Dimension Implementation Meeting
Warsaw, 3 October 2006

Mme Moderator,

Trafficking in Armenia has origins similar to those in the majority of countries in transition where the economies are yet to become fully sustainable. My distinguished colleague from Ukraine gave a rather comprehensive overview of those causes and I will not dwell into them given the time restrictions Mme Moderator is so resolute to follow. The issue of trafficking gained due recognition only a few years ago and there certainly is a great work to do both in terms of addressing the root causes and preventing the crime, but also in providing support and assistance to the victims.

In terms of addressing the root causes, the setting up of the Anti-trafficking Commission and drafting of the first National Plan of Action coincided with the elaboration and adoption of the PRSP, the Anti-corruption Program and the National Program for the protection of the rights of the child for 2004-2015. A similar program for the protection of the women's rights is under elaboration.

However, while we expect that the full and successful implementation of these programs will eliminate a significant number of the problems and pave the way for the solution of the others, we are trying to focus our efforts on addressing the most pressing challenges – support and protection of the victims and prosecution of the perpetrators.

These are the main issues that we expect to become a cornerstone of the new National Plan of Action which will come to replace the first one when it expires at the end of this year. The new plan of action should be more victim-oriented and include major anti-trafficking measures:

- in law enforcement – analysis of the existing anti-trafficking legislation and proposals for possible reform, including in the field of support. And, of course, the training of the law enforcement personnel which is not always fully aware of the issues,
- in prevention – dissemination of information regarding the danger of trafficking, especially in the provinces. This calls for an intensified cooperation with the media, particularly in TV and radio presentations. The problem of awareness-raising in provinces is especially acute, the villages being a main 'sources' of trafficking in human beings. We hope that the Rural Development Program with its targeted development projects for the most impoverished border villages will partially address the problem of the trafficking,

- support and assistance to the victims. As it tries to allocate more resources to secure medical, psychological and legal support, legal counseling and re-integration, the Government highly appreciates the assistance and advice from the international community and the valuable work of the Armenian civil society and the NGO's working with the victims and the at the shelters.

Mme Moderator,

There is one more point I would like to mention which has also been briefly addressed by some of the previous speakers. It is the identification of the victim with the perpetrator, the lack of understanding of the ordeal of the victims of the trafficking and the failure to distinguish between voluntary working migration and exploitation. We need to work more with the societies and the law enforcement officers, to ensure that there is no new victimization and that those who have suffered any kind of exploitation receive all the support needed. It became apparent in the course of this morning's discussions that this issue needs to be addressed both in the countries of origin and of destination.

To conclude we want to stress the need for regional and international cooperation to fight the scourge of trafficking. Trafficking is not a national issue; it cannot and should not be addressed by individual countries alone, especially in a region like the South Caucasus, where so many problems are common and interlinked. We look forward to a more inclusive and intensified cooperation.

I thank you, Mme Moderator.