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Permanent Mission of Ukraine
to the International Organizations in Vienna

Statement by the Delegation of Ukraine
in response to Dr Kari Johnstone, OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings

as delivered by Ambassador Yurii Vitrenko,
Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna,
to the 1582nd meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council,
22 October 2026

Mr Chairperson,

Ukraine warmly welcomes Dr Kari Johnstone back to the Permanent Council and thanks her for the report and for the steadfast, practical engagement of her Office. We particularly value your ability to turn international commitments into concrete protection for people at risk.

The 2026 OSCE Survey Report delivers a sobering message: participating States recorded approximately 102,000 victims of trafficking between 2021 and 2024. Labour exploitation now accounts for the largest share of identified cases. Yet the gap between legislative progress and protection on the ground persists. The real measure of our collective success is not the number of policies adopted, but the number of people they actually protect.

For Ukraine, this challenge is inseparable from Russia's war of aggression. Mass displacement, destroyed livelihoods, family separation and occupation create conditions in which traffickers thrive. Women and children, internally displaced persons, returnees and survivors of captivity face distinct risks. Russia's unlawful deportation and forcible transfer of Ukrainian children also demand accountability under the applicable international legal framework. These realities must never be reduced to an abstract reference to a "humanitarian crisis".

Ukraine, for its part, is strengthening protection now, without waiting for the war to end. On 3 September 2026, Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine approved the State Targeted Social Programme for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings until 2030, placing early identification, trauma-informed assistance and accountability at the centre of our response. With valuable OSCE expertise, we are also examining models for an independent National Rapporteur to reinforce evidence-based oversight.

Madam Special Representative,

We especially appreciate your personal commitment to the R.E.S.T.O.R.E. Ukraine Alliance, initiated by Austria, Canada, Italy, Poland and Ukraine, with your Office serving as its secretariat and expert partner. Since 1 October 2026, the Alliance Pledge has been open for signatures. This gives participating States, donors and businesses a tangible opportunity to embed ethical recruitment, safeguards in procurement and supply chains, effective oversight of labour intermediaries, and safe reporting and referral mechanisms into Ukraine's recovery.

Our message is simple: rebuilding Ukraine must never mean exposing people to new forms of exploitation. Protection must be designed into recovery from the outset, not added after harm has occurred.

Ukraine stands ready to deepen this work with your Office, ODIHR and all participating States. We count on continued cross-border co-operation, meaningful survivor participation and sustained attention to the consequences of Russia's aggression.

Thank you, Mr Chairperson.