



Address by Ambassador Janez Lenarčič,  
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Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR)

at the  
Regional Meeting of National Co-ordinators

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Check against delivery!

Ladies and gentlemen,

A warm welcome to today's meeting of National Co-ordinators on combating human trafficking.

Thank the Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings - Maria Grazia Giammarinaro - for taking the initiative to organize this expert meeting on challenges and progress in combating trafficking for labour exploitation.

I see this occasion as a logical follow up to the working session on human trafficking at the Warsaw segment of the Review Conference three weeks ago where, together with the Special Representative, our Office highlighted the need to better understand and enhance responses to child trafficking for labour exploitation.

Our Office has been working for years - and with many of you personally - to raise awareness about labour trafficking. We strongly welcomed the 2007 Ministerial Council Decision focusing on trafficking for labour exploitation in which pS committed to enhancing identification, assistance and access to justice of persons trafficked for labour exploitation.

Unfortunately, work across the OSCE region shows that, in particular with regard to labour trafficking, there are still significant gaps in the protection of the rights of trafficked persons and the prevention of trafficking. Let me mention a few:

- We often find that civil society actors are inadequately included in victim identification and National Referral Mechanisms;
- We find that victim identification and assistance as such is handled inadequately, with little or no access to justice, also with regard to compensation for trafficked and exploited persons;
- And we see a lack of comprehensive prevention strategies and measures to implement labor standards and preventing labor exploitation.

Human rights protection for victims and vulnerable groups is still not at the centre of how countries respond to trafficking. The result is reminiscent of action against sex trafficking over a decade ago: victims are not identified and properly assisted, but punished, criminalized and stigmatized.

In some countries, adequate protection of the rights of trafficked persons is additionally being hampered by the absence of a victim rights culture and a lack of victim sensitive support mechanisms.

Today's meeting is a good opportunity to discuss some of these challenges and gaps. Especially for this morning's session on access to justice and compensation for trafficked persons - which will be moderated by ODIHR staff -, I am confident that you as National Co-ordinators are well placed to share with us information in relation to your country's efforts and challenges to improve trafficked and exploited persons' access to justice and compensation.

Supporting access to rights and remedies, including to compensation, has been one of the priorities of our Anti-Trafficking Programme since 2006.

In 2008 we published a study on *Compensation for Trafficked and Exploited Persons in the OSCE Region*, highlighting the international standards on compensation and the key barriers that trafficked persons face in accessing justice. We are very glad to see that now, two years on, trafficked and exploited persons' access to compensation is more present on the agendas of participating States.

Effective access to compensation, however, means treating trafficked and exploited persons as rights' holders and enable them to claim compensation through a variety of mechanisms - criminal, civil and labour law proceedings as well as state compensation funds and mediation. Unfortunately, data from across the OSCE region show that trafficked persons' access to compensation is far from being a reality.

Let me finally highlight some of our Office's efforts to assist state authorities and civil society actors - both in countries of destination and origin - in enhancing trafficked persons' access to justice and rights. We do this through

- legal assistance to trafficked persons to access justice and compensation;
- outreach work to trafficked persons and vulnerable groups, including migrant workers;
- training seminars and expert meetings for criminal justice actors - police, prosecutors, judges, lawyers - and civil society organizations on international standards and good practices on effective access to justice and compensation;

- strengthening ties between countries of origin and destination through the exchange of expertise, information and contacts to enhance the human rights protection in cross-border cases.
- enhancing co-operation between civil society organizations, such as information, outreach and assistance to migrant workers, across borders.
- organizing study trips for state authorities and civil society representatives that allow for an exchange of expertise.
- supporting the European Initiative to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings (Comp.Act), both as member of its Advisory Board and by funding a number of activities on access to justice and compensation of some of its national members.

I wish to assure you that ODIHR is ready to continue working together with you and across the OSCE region to ensure full implementation of the human dimension commitments related to human trafficking for labour exploitation.

Thank you.