

OSCE HUMAN DIMENSION IMPLEMENTATION MEETING
UK National Statement –
Working Session 9 Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings

Thank you Mr Moderator,

We fully align with the statement delivered by Belgium on behalf of the EU, but would like to add some comments in our national capacity.

Modern Slavery and human trafficking is a global problem - complex, multifaceted and with no respect for borders.

In the UK, we estimate there are between 10-13,000 potential victims from 130 different countries of origin, including – in fact the largest group – from the UK itself.

The UK's national referral mechanism saw a 36% increase in referrals of potential victims in 2018 - evidence that the more effective our responses become, the greater our awareness of the sheer scale of the challenge we face. We do not have all the answers but offer a couple of examples of the UK's approach to tackling both supply and demand:

Domestically:

We have invested significantly in developing the skills of law enforcement to detect and investigate crimes and in enhancing care for victims of modern slavery. Our Modern Slavery Act 2015 brought in a stronger legal framework to address these crimes, including those committed by British citizens outside of the UK.

We are testing a new national model for Independent Child Trafficking Advocates – we want to make sure that this service meets the varied and specific needs of all trafficked children.

On the supply side:

The “Transparency in Supply Chains” provision in our Act has transformed business culture in the UK. Many senior business leaders are engaged on this issue and we are committed to creating a new central reporting service to make it easier for NGOs, investors and consumers to scrutinise the actions businesses have taken to prevent Modern Slavery in their supply chains.

Internationally we continue to call for states to join the 89 countries that have already signed up to the Call to Action to End Forced Labour, Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking, launched during the UN General Assembly in 2017, and for those states already on board to move to implementation. Building on that Call, the UK jointly launched the ‘Principles to Guide Government Action to Combat Human Trafficking in Global Supply Chains’ with the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand in September 2018.

Recommendations

- for states to integrate the private sector into Modern Slavery response – shine a spotlight on supply chains and harness the power of consumers to hold them to account.
- embrace independent review as a tool to strengthen policies and systems. A detailed independent review of the UK legislation was completed this summer and its recommendations will be used to strengthen further the UK response to this heinous crime.
- Get your own house in order – for example the UK Government’s Modern Slavery Assessment tool, designed to gather more information about risks in government supply chains, is now available to all UK public sector organisations.