



**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe**

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**Human Dimension Implementation Meeting**

Welcoming Address

Working Session 11: Humanitarian issues and other commitments, including:

Implementation of the OSCE Commitments to  
Combat Trafficking in Human Beings

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Warsaw

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Colleagues,

First of all, please let me warmly welcome all of you to this working session. I would like to thank the Serbian Chairmanship for inviting me to address you today. I am also grateful to ODIHR for the continued support and co-ordination of this important event.

This is a great privilege and opportunity for me to work together with the OSCE participating States and civil society and contribute to the ongoing dialogue on humanitarian issues.

2015 marks the 10th anniversary of the adoption of the *Addendum to the OSCE Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings: Addressing the Special Needs of Child Victims of Trafficking for Protection and Assistance* as well as the 15th anniversary of the adoption of the *Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography and on the involvement of children in armed conflict*.

This is why it seems very appropriate that our discussion this afternoon will raise a matter of great concern to all of those who have gathered here today. **Trafficking in children** is one of the worst forms of violence. **It is modern-day slavery** and it poses a grave threat to the human development and security of all countries.

**There is a growing body of evidence that child trafficking is increasing and becoming more complex and harder to address due to the use of the Internet and mixed migration flows.** According to the ILO there are around 5.5 million child victims of forced labour and human trafficking globally.<sup>1</sup> According to UNODC's *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2014*, 33 per cent of trafficking victims are children, a 5 per cent increase compared to previous years.<sup>2</sup>

Trafficking in children for **sexual exploitation** remains prevalent and involves mainly girls, but there are an increasing number of reports involving boys.

Not only is the sexual exploitation of children rising, the **average age of victims** is also falling. In one European country, the average age of child victims has fallen from 15 to 13 in the last five years.<sup>3</sup> A particularly worrying trend relates to the use of child victims within the criminal chain of activity, where they are forced to become controllers of their peers. Related to this phenomenon are cases of child victims prosecuted for crimes which were committed as a direct consequence of their trafficking experience. This is not an isolated occurrence, but unfortunately the principle of non-punishment of victims, especially child victims is rarely applied, although it was incorporated into the OSCE 2013 Addendum to the THB Action Plan, the EU Directive on trafficking, and the Council of Europe Convention.

Information from national investigative authorities and NGOs indicates that there has been **exponential growth in the use of the Internet and other**

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<sup>1</sup> ILO, *Global Estimates of Forced Labour 2012: Results and Methodology*. More information is available at [http://www.ilo.org/global/topics/forced-labour/publications/WCMS\\_181953/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/global/topics/forced-labour/publications/WCMS_181953/lang--en/index.htm) accessed 8 September 2014

<sup>2</sup> UNODC, *2014 Global Report on Trafficking in Persons*. Vienna, 2014, available at: [http://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/glotip/GLOTIP\\_2014\\_full\\_report.pdf](http://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/glotip/GLOTIP_2014_full_report.pdf) page 5

<sup>3</sup> ECPAT, March 2014. "The Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in Europe: Overview and counteracting strategy".

**information technology by traffickers** to recruit and exploit victims, including children, and to launder their profits. There are also growing indications of sexual abuse and exploitation in both online and offline settings.<sup>4</sup>

Although sexual exploitation remains one of the most widespread forms of child trafficking, **other forms of exploitation are also on the rise.** These include forced labour such as domestic servitude as well as forced criminality, like petty crimes, begging and pickpocketing, but also cannabis cultivation and drug dealing. Child victims are often doubly exploited, forced into labour or crime during the day, and then sexually exploited during the night. Exploitation may also follow illegal adoption, and can occur in forced marriages. Internal trafficking in children, especially for sex tourism and begging, is also increasing in some of the pS. This should stimulate these countries to think about improving their own national children protection systems.

On the other side of the spectrum, I would like to single out the phenomenon of child soldiers that are exploited in forced criminality. To be more precise, according to certain media reports, an increasing number of children are becoming involved in foreign terrorist fighter activities. I believe that we need to start looking at this new threat in a more responsible manner.

**In other words, children are trafficked for any possible exploitative purpose and are a source of huge profits for their exploiters.**

The **cruelty of the crime, as well as its traumatic impact** on the child are always deeply destructive and leave lifelong scars. Years are needed to

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<sup>4</sup> ECPAT, March 2014. “The Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in Europe: Overview and counteracting strategy”.

rehabilitate boys and girls whose physical and psychological health has been damaged in this way.

A **child's vulnerability** is the result of the interplay of various individual, interpersonal, family, social and economic factors that influence the risk of being abused and exploited as well as the child's capacity to manage these risks. The vulnerability of children is indeed multidimensional. That is why our response to this crime must be comprehensive and multidimensional.

**Unaccompanied minors and children internally displaced in-country** are particularly at risk of being exploited or abused not only during their journey but also upon arrival in the destination countries. The number of such children is increasing in many pS. According to the Swedish Migration Agency, in June 2015, 1447 unaccompanied minors came to Sweden to seek asylum. This is the highest ever figure recorded in a single month. So far this year the number of children has risen by 93 percent compared with the equivalent period of the previous year.<sup>5</sup> Most alarming is, however, that in 2014 over half of the world's refugees were children, according to the UN refugee agency UNHCR. It is the highest proportion of children in more than 10 years.<sup>6</sup> The current migration crisis in Europe also leads us to think about children who are traveling with or without their parents from Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq and other Middle Eastern and African countries as the governments of the OSCE participating States, international organizations and civil society actors look for emergency solutions to accommodate migrants, including children.

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<sup>5</sup> The Swedish Migration, *Record number of unaccompanied minors arrived in Sweden in June*. July 2015. <http://www.migrationsverket.se/English/About-the-Migration-Agency/News-archive/News-archive-2015/2015-07-10-Record-number-of-unaccompanied-minors-arrived-in-Sweden-in-June.html>

<sup>6</sup> UNHCR, *2014 Global Trends Report*. [http://unhcr.org/556725e69.html#\\_ga=1.148543477.39731104.1435078536](http://unhcr.org/556725e69.html#_ga=1.148543477.39731104.1435078536)

**The OSCE has been particularly active in adopting commitments that address trafficking in children and these worrying trends in particular.**

Let me remind you that the OSCE was one of the first to adopt an *Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings*, a very comprehensive document, and it has maintained its strategic value throughout the past decade. The OSCE Action Plan was updated twice: (1) in 2005 with the *Addendum on the special needs of child victims of trafficking* and (2) in 2013 with the *Addendum to the OSCE Action Plan on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings: One Decade Later* (adopted in Kyiv). Both Addendums contain innovative provisions on the **prevention and protection** of child trafficking. For instance, special attention is devoted to children in institutions and orphanages, unaccompanied children, child asylum-seekers, and children left behind by migrating parents.

Let me also underline that there is no lack of other OSCE and international instruments that address these issues. But **the concrete implementation of recommendations and commitments contained in these documents lag behind.**

Therefore it is high time to consider more seriously international recommendations and promising national practices in order to protect children from violence and trafficking in human beings regardless of their age, status, gender, ethnicity or social and cultural background.

To this end, the OSCE and specifically my Office continue supporting participating States in the implementation of their commitments. I am particularly devoted to this during my country visits.

We are currently conducting a **survey** for governments and NGOs on the progress made in the OSCE region towards implementing the OSCE anti-trafficking commitments, with a focus on the 2013 *Addendum to the OSCE Action Plan* which especially targets child exploitation. The survey will allow us to address gaps in knowledge regarding the state of child trafficking and national responses in the OSCE region. The NGO survey will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the actions each country is taking. Let me remind you that the deadline to complete the survey is 31 October 2015!

Our work at the political and operational levels through country visits, conferences, workshops, training activities or direct project implementation permits to develop **recommendations** on specific and practical measures which will guide the pS in the implementation of commitments.

As a general recommendation, I would like to recall that the best interests of the child shall be considered paramount at all times. In order to achieve this we must go beyond a mere promotion of a child victim-focused approach to concrete action.

More specifically I would like to mention that in the **area of prevention**:

- participating States should improve educational opportunities for all children without discrimination. This should also include the elimination of administrative and practical barriers that impede equal access to education for vulnerable children;
- participating States should improve child care and child protection systems;
- participating States should develop measures to prevent child trafficking and improve their identification in sectors where child trafficking is most prevalent.

There should also be a progress in the **area of implementation of protection** measures:

- as mentioned before the non-punishment clause applies to all victims of trafficking, including children;
- participating States should provide unconditional access for children to shelters addressing their needs, regardless of their administrative status or their readiness to co-operate with the authorities;
- children should have access to comprehensive protective services including physical, psychosocial, legal, educational, housing and health-care assistance.

In addition to what I have just said, I would like to emphasize some key recommendations from this year's high level *Alliance against Trafficking in Persons* conference. One of the panels discussed the **particular protection needs of unaccompanied minors** along their migration routes and came up with the conclusions that modern child protection systems should include:

- an effective birth registration mechanism to respond to the specific needs of vulnerable and socially excluded children;
- the appointment of a legal guardian;
- free legal assistance and the possibility to claim compensation and
- long-term rehabilitation programmes.



## **Conclusion**

Dear Colleagues,

Due to time constraints I cannot go into further details but I hope that my words will stimulate your fruitful discussion.

The road ahead is not without challenges, but I believe that by working together, including with our civil society partners, we can continue to translate OSCE commitments into concrete action.

Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for your attention.