

KEYNOTE REMARKS

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Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honor to be here today -- to discuss an issue of grave concern for us all. I would like to congratulate Ambassador Madina Jarbussynova on her appointment and thank her for inviting me to speak today.

Introduction

Migration, historically, has been overwhelmingly positive – and of great benefit to migrants, host and home communities. Yet abuse and exploitation of migrants are all too frequent and are increasing. While the smooth and legal mobility of available workers across borders contributes positively to global development -- behind the scenes the demand for cheap labour flourishes. Migrants are cheated and deceived throughout the recruitment process; are denied access to fundamental human rights; and at worse, are ill-treated, abused, controlled and trafficked into varying and multiple forms of exploitation.

Despite our collective efforts, we have no reason to believe, or even suspect, that human trafficking is any less prevalent today than it was when we began our work nearly two decades ago. We estimate that nearly a million persons are trafficked every year. With all due respect to all of us and to all our efforts, we collectively have hardly made a dent on the hard shell of human trafficking (and the same sad record is also the case when it comes to human smuggling). This should not discourage but spur us on to more urgent action.

With this in mind, I would like to highlight three areas where, from IOM's perspective, a more concerted effort is required – and could make a difference:

1- Demand exploitation

While we had some limited success in strengthening protection for victims of trafficking, we have had very little success in preventing exploitation from occurring in the first place; and almost no progress to show in prosecution of the criminal trafficking kingpins. Yes, we catch some of the small fish, but the big fish always get away.

Traditionally, prevention efforts have focused mainly on origin countries of trafficked persons.

- 1) The most common prevention approach to date has been information campaign to raise awareness about the danger of leaving one's community—that is disseminating information to people who seem most likely to be targeted by traffickers.
- 2) Another prevention strategy has been to offer increased economic opportunities in communities seen to be at risk of trafficking.

The debate has intensified about the viability of preventing trafficking in persons solely by interrupting the ‘supply’ of potential trafficked persons in countries of origin. There is a growing international consensus, however, that such a complex problem requires multiple approaches.

In particular, these concerns have generated greater discussion around the need to look at factors that contribute to the demand side for goods and services that could be tainted by trafficking in persons for labour exploitation.

Two weeks ago in Vienna, the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons (ICAT) issued a policy paper entitled 'Preventing Trafficking in Persons by Addressing Demand'. The paper, launched under IOM’s Chairmanship, is the second in a series of policy papers drafted jointly by the members of the ICAT Working Group.

The ‘Demand’ paper identifies concrete steps that different actors need to take if we are to reduce this demand. In particular, the paper identifies the six strategies and approaches to address demand:

1. Strengthening criminal justice responses which serve to reduce demand that fosters trafficking for labour exploitation;
2. Promoting measures and mechanisms to improve labour conditions in sectors vulnerable to the use of victims trafficked for labour exploitation;
3. Taking action against exploitation associated with the migration process, including through better regulation of private recruitment agencies;

4. Encouraging private sector initiatives to address exploitative labour practices within supply chains;
5. Promoting consumer-based action against products made from trafficked labour; and
6. Addressing the root causes and contributing factors, including social norms that enable exploitative practices to flourish.

Government, business and civil society actors all have a role to play in addressing this complex problem. For example, in the absence of a global system of robust government regulation, employers need to ensure transparency and fair recruitment practice in their labour supply chains; employers need to demand that their suppliers and partners adhere to these values.

And this brings me to my second point: Recruitment agency exploitation.

2- Employers and others face complex challenges when trying to promote fair and ethical recruitment

More people than ever are migrating for work, the potential for recruitment exploitation and abuse is rising commensurately. Recruitment is the first step in the labour migration process. When corrupted by unfair and exploitative practices, recruitment compromises the rights of migrant workers and hurts business interests. The effects of corrupt recruitment include links to smuggling and trafficking networks, as well as workplace abuse and exploitation.

The issue of how, systematically, to address unfair and unethical recruitment practices involves a broad range of persons, organizations

and interests. To help build momentum, IOM has joined forces with the International Organization of Employers, as well as governments, international organizations and civil society groups; together we are developing innovative tools that will help promote fair recruitment practice. The first of these tools is the International Recruitment Integrity System: a voluntary accreditation process for recruiters and employers that will help galvanize a community of good practice: IRIS will enable migrants, employers and governments to distinguish practitioners committed to ethical recruitment from unscrupulous actors. IRIS will help bridge the regulatory and enforcement gaps between governments; IRIS will also help eliminate a global business model often predicated on abuse and exploitation. By supporting these efforts, the business community is demonstrating their leadership in ensuring the safe migration of workers, and that they are a critical part of the solution of a problem that affects us all. For IRIS to be effective, we will have a robust monitoring and compliance mechanism.

I would like to make a third and final point, which is very important to me and, I believe, to all of you.

3- The prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse in humanitarian responses

In December 2010 – almost four years ago -- the Inter-Agency Standing Committee appointed me to serve as the UN System’s “Champion” to Prevent Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA). My mandate is to advocate for stronger engagement from the IASC

community and to promote PSEA as a political and operational priority in emergency responses.

The international community has taken too long to recognize how vulnerable women, girls and children are to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) in crisis and conflict situations. I spoke to the Frontex border management conference last month and presented the concept of Humanitarian Border Management in conflicts (Libya, Syria). In particular, the rising incidence of sexual violence associated with human trafficking is a major concern to IOM.

Women and children are always the most vulnerable in times of crisis. Opportunistic traffickers and would-be labor exploiters seek to reap the rewards of refugees, IDPs and other vulnerable groups. Young women are at particular risk of sexual exploitation, whether that is to fill a local demand or an increased demand for sexual services due to the arrival of aid agencies and foreign workers. Men and boys are affected too.

Despite the good and valuable work of protection actors, sexual exploitation and violence against women remains largely unaddressed. More needs to be done urgently to protect vulnerable individuals and reduce human trafficking and other abuses against conflict-affected populations.

Conclusion

Let me conclude by reaffirming IOM's commitment to work with the Alliance and all our partners for the protection of those in situations of exploitation. Together, we will continue what we have

started, building a collective response that will, eventually, eradicate human trafficking, smuggling and exploitation from the world. In this regard, I would like to reaffirm IOM's willingness to collaborate with the OSCE in dealing with trafficking in human beings.

To accomplish such a lofty goal, however, we must match words with action, rhetoric with reality. Progress in the three areas that I have identified would help us toward achieving that goal, namely to: 1) address the demand side, 2) establish a code of conduct for the recruitment industry, and 3) prevent sexual exploitation and abuse, and violence against women, as a top priority.

I look forward to the collaboration that will take place in the coming days, as well as to hearing the reflections and experiences of my distinguished colleagues.

Thank you.