

(U) J/TIP Ambassador Dyer's Remarks at the
23rd Conference of the Alliance against Trafficking in Persons
Panel 2: The Anti-trafficking Architecture – Systems and Structures
10:30-12:30pm CET
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Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen, good morning. Thank you for the warm welcome, and special thanks to Val Richey and his office for convening this event and inviting me to speak on this panel today.

Throughout the course of my career, I have worked to prevent and respond to human trafficking and gender-based violence issues. I first became aware of the issue of human trafficking in the mid-1990s when I was serving as a specialized domestic and sexual violence prosecutor in Texas, and volunteering at a local women's shelter. At that time, I began seeing women who did not precisely fit the category of victims of "domestic violence" or "sexual violence" but who were in dire need of protection, justice, and assistance. We did not have a trafficking law in Texas until 2004, so prior to that, we used other laws, such as sexual assault and false imprisonment, to hold perpetrators accountable.

Fast forward to today, where I am honored to serve as the Ambassador-at-Large to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons for the U.S. State Department. Settling into my new role, I've been eager to explore how I can apply my experiences from state and local levels and from leading a global NGO focused on women's leadership to the U.S. government's efforts to combat human trafficking. I'm delighted to reflect on systems and structures – including coordinating mechanisms and survivor engagement – that are strengthening the U.S. government's efforts to prevent human trafficking, prosecute traffickers, and protect victims.

National and Local Coordinating Authorities and Survivor Engagement

In the United States, the national coordinating authority is complemented by numerous local-level anti-trafficking task forces. Both national and local-level coordination are critical to comprehensively addressing human trafficking. The U.S. government's national coordinating body is the President's Interagency Task

Force to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons (*task force*). Established by the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 (TVPA), the task force's membership has grown from five departments and agencies to 20 today. It includes our Departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Defense, Education, Health and Human Services, Homeland Security, Interior, Labor, Justice, Transportation, Treasury, among others. This growth reflects the need for a comprehensive multidisciplinary approach to combat this crime. Task force agencies collaborate to advance our National Action Plan, which is organized around the foundations of U.S. and global anti-trafficking efforts – prevention, protection, prosecution, and partnerships. Agencies regularly gather, including at the Cabinet level, to advance policies and promote action. This past February, the Biden Administration held its second task force meeting and the first I've had the opportunity to participate in - where each agency made substantive action commitments for the coming year.

As part of the task force coordinating structure, I chair the Senior Policy Operating Group (*group*), which includes senior anti-trafficking experts representing task force agencies. The group is responsible for continuing coordination among federal technical experts. For example, five standing committees meet regularly to focus on research and data; grantmaking; public awareness and outreach; victims services; and procurement and supply chains. In addition, federal investigation and prosecution agencies coordinate directly on law enforcement matters through a separate Federal Enforcement Working Group on Human Trafficking

One of the most meaningful moments for me so far as Ambassador was hearing from Brenda Myers-Powell, a Member of the U.S. Advisory Council on Human Trafficking, at this year's task force meeting. The Council, established in 2015, comprises survivor leaders who advise and make recommendations on federal anti-trafficking policies. Ms. Myers-Powell presented on the Council's 6th report, released in September 2022 and publicly available online. The report focuses on topics that draw from Council Members' personal and professional experiences, including understanding the root causes of human trafficking, child exploitation and online threats, and demand reduction. Based on their recommendations, and those of prior Councils, the U.S. government is working to include a more diverse representation of survivors in public awareness and outreach efforts. Importantly, the U.S. Congress passed legislation in 2021 that gave the

Department of State authority to compensate Council Members for their work, and in 2022 other legislation made the Council a permanent body. These actions set a high standard for our federal government on incorporating survivors' expertise that I routinely cite in bilateral engagements around the world.

In addition to the task force as a high-level national coordinating body, the U.S. also relies on strong state and local level multidisciplinary task forces that meet regularly to share best practices, promote holistic approaches, and coordinate directly on detecting, investigating, and prosecuting human trafficking crimes and supporting survivors.

One example is the Enhanced Collaborative Model Human Trafficking Program, or ECM, an initiative funded by the U.S. Department of Justice. Approximately 50 ECM task forces operate across the United States to identify victims of human trafficking in local communities, ensure survivors have access to services, and bring traffickers to justice. This is a collaborative approach including victim service providers, law enforcement and prosecution personnel, survivors, and other governmental and non-governmental partners. When my hometown of Dallas, Texas created its human trafficking task force in 2001, I served on it as the representative of the prosecutor's office. Working closely with representatives from local law enforcement, service providers, healthcare clinics, and public school officials increased my ability to seek justice for victims and created a more seamless continuum of care for survivors.

Progress and Challenges

I want to take a few moments to highlight some progress that has resulted from these various coordination models. First, with more departments and agencies than ever now participating in our national task force, the United States is making efforts to raise awareness and integrate effective anti-trafficking measures into nearly all major areas of government. The fact that the task force meets consistently and with high-level representation—and broadcasts these meetings publicly – enhances coordination and creates a strong incentive for agencies to participate and report on concrete and new actions.

Second, through these mechanisms the U.S. government is deepening political will and resources to incorporate victim-centered, trauma-informed, and

culturally-responsive approaches. Over my career, I have traveled to more than 20 countries to train local law enforcement, prosecutors, and judges on the importance of adopting these approaches to combating human trafficking. I'm encouraged to see them taking root around the world and especially within my home country. For example, the Department of Justice last year launched a department-wide working group of victim specialists to enhance collaboration on victim-centered, trauma-informed, and culturally-responsive best practices in assisting vulnerable victims. And the Department of the Interior is finalizing a human trafficking awareness training that will be available to all 70,000 of its employees and is developing video training for law enforcement officers incorporating trauma-informed approaches and best practices for assisting victims of human trafficking, sexual assault, domestic violence, and other crimes.

Finally, the national task force has been instrumental in encouraging agencies to implement the United States' Federal Acquisition Regulation for Combating Trafficking in Persons, a landmark regulation that prohibits human trafficking and related conduct (such as passport retention and worker-paid recruitment fees) in government contracting supply chains. As far as we know, the U.S. government is the world's largest single purchaser of goods and services. Federal contractors and sub-contractors are on notice of significant consequences if they are found to be engaging in trafficking-related activities or disregarding human trafficking in their supply chains.

Along with progress come persistent challenges. The U.S. government at all levels must do more to avoid inappropriately penalizing victims for acts they committed as a direct result of being trafficked. This principle can be difficult to implement when victims are not identified as victims, because the means used to coerce their compliance are invisible, while the evidence of their unlawful acts is more immediately apparent. Government anti-trafficking systems and programs should advance equity and decrease vulnerability to human trafficking of marginalized communities. And the challenges related to combating forced labor in supply chains include the scale, complexity, and opaqueness of global supply chains that often obscure responsibility and prevent accountability, and the resources needed to manage the risk of human trafficking in government procurement and other parts of the economy.

Another challenge for the national task force, and indeed for all U.S. anti-trafficking stakeholders, is that consensus-building and coordination across the many federal, state, local, tribal, territorial, and non-governmental entities that each play a critical role in the response to human trafficking is complicated and time-consuming. For maximum impact, the U.S. Advisory Council of survivors must build relationships with all 20 task force agencies to formulate actionable recommendations specific to each agency's roles, responsibilities, and authorities.

For governments contemplating a similar national task force and corresponding advisory council of survivors, I recommend regular and transparent task force operating procedures at both technical and leadership levels; support systems for council members to maximize the impact of their tenures; firewalls to promote council members' independence; and providing council members sufficiently long tenures to facilitate their meaningful contributions.

Victim Services

Now, I'll touch briefly on National Referral Mechanisms (NRMs) and then turn to victim services before closing my remarks.

Consistent with the OSCE's Handbook on NRMs, I believe that when properly designed and implemented, NRMs can effectively identify victims and facilitate comprehensive protection – proactively identifying and assisting trafficking victims; providing access to justice and redress or remedies; and facilitating individualized, victim-centered, trauma-informed, and culturally-responsive services as well as social inclusion. I would further argue that NRMs can also promote longer-term care to facilitate trafficking victims' mental, physical, financial, and social recovery. Yet to be effective, NRMs must be adapted to the national context and be truly multi-disciplinary, including by empowering first responders and civil society service providers and experts to identify and refer victims, and by incorporating the recommendations of trafficking victims and survivors. In the United States we have mechanisms at both the national and local levels that function similarly to NRMs by referring victims quickly to services, such as the local task forces mentioned above. Another example is our National Human Trafficking Hotline, which in 2022 received over 55,000 substantial messages including calls, texts, chats, online tips, and emails. The Hotline identified and provided referrals in more than 10,000 reports of potential human trafficking situations involving more than 16,000 potential victims.

Several federal agencies also administer grants designed to support ongoing assistance and services for both U.S. and foreign trafficking victims across the United States. The Department of Justice and Department of Health and Human Services are the primary agencies for this purpose; the two together have provided approximately \$100 million on average in new funding each year. They administer a wide range of programs with a view to enhance victims' access to comprehensive and specialized services, including case management and referrals, direct services, housing, legal assistance, and mental health services. Every year these programs serve thousands of victims and survivors.

Conclusion

In closing, I want to encourage others to consider implementing national and local-level coordinating bodies that meet consistently and commit to transparency in integrating diverse perspectives, including the expertise and recommendations of survivors. I also want to encourage others to pursue all available means to sufficiently resource specialized short- and long-term services for all victims of trafficking.

And finally, Val, I want to thank you for your leadership on these issues in the OSCE over the last four years and for all of your work through the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons. You have truly helped advance the anti-trafficking work of the OSCE in the region and beyond. I wish you all the best in your new role and hope to also have the opportunity to collaborate with you on an anti-trafficking video in the future!

Thank you.

