

PC.DEL/494/12  
1 June 2012

ENGLISH  
Original: FRENCH

## **STATEMENT BY THE EUROPEAN UNION AT THE 914th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

Vienna, 31 May 2012

### **In response to the OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings**

We are pleased to welcome the OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings.

A few months after the adoption of Ministerial Declaration 1/11, the European Union (EU) reaffirms its political commitment to combating all forms of trafficking in human beings and wishes to point out that this subject area is one of its priorities.

Trafficking remains a complex and constantly changing phenomenon. Your remarks today remind us that especially in the OSCE area trafficking in human beings remains an alarming and unacceptable phenomenon for our societies.

Firstly, it is alarming and unacceptable in terms of its magnitude because it affects millions of persons in the countries of origin, transit and destination. The migration question is therefore crucial if we are to combat trafficking more effectively. In our view, it is necessary to make a clear distinction between trafficking in human beings and illegal immigration so as to be able to look after and rehabilitate the victims when they come from foreign countries.

Secondly, it is alarming and unacceptable in terms of the diversity of its manifestations, as you regularly point out, whether for purposes of sexual exploitation, forced labour, organ harvesting or other forms of exploitation.

Lastly, it is alarming and unacceptable because it affects the most vulnerable, mainly women, but also children and they deserve particular attention.

The EU is not prepared to stand by and watch the growth of this phenomenon that at times is comparable to a form of torture. We must intensify our commitment. The EU will continue to support you and all the OSCE executive structures and field missions to ensure the full implementation of the OSCE Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings of 2003. As shown by the recent seminar successfully organized in Warsaw by the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, it is essential that we adopt legal frameworks, strategies or national action plans that respect and protect human rights. This mechanism should be based on specialized structures and include training, especially for the judiciary,

the police and lawyers. On the basis of the Palermo Protocol, these legal frameworks should cover as extensively as possible the phenomenon of trafficking in its various definitions and forms and accord a central position to the victims.

The EU is committed to an integrated and balanced policy of combating trafficking, as indicated in Directive 2011/36 of the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union. This Directive does not focus solely on punishment but also aims to prevent such crimes and protect the victims. It supports partnerships with non-governmental organizations, representatives of the private sector or other international organizations.

We are aware that there is still much work to be done. These efforts should focus on the prevention of the phenomenon, the identification, protection and care of the victims until they receive compensation, the prosecution and sentencing of the perpetrators and the confiscation of the assets and profits resulting from this crime. This justifies the OSCE's holistic, co-ordinated and coherent approach, which is also in keeping with the EU's future strategy on trafficking in human beings.

We welcome your consistent activity, supported by your Office, which contributes to political awareness with a view to adopting measures to combat this crime in accordance with international commitments. We encourage you to step up co-ordination within the OSCE, especially with the field missions, which are very active in the countries where they are located. The EU would like to make it clear that it is committed to working with the OSCE and the Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings in order to respond to this phenomenon, in particular by strengthening co-operation with OSCE participating States that are not members of the EU. We believe it is crucial to strengthen international co-operation and co-ordination of action. The OSCE has a full complement of commitments and competent structures for combating trafficking in human beings. We are convinced that it is a credible partner for combating trafficking and strengthening stability and security in the OSCE area.

In conclusion, the European Union thanks Ms. Giammarinaro and her staff for the work they have done. We wish them every success in their future activities.

The acceding country Croatia<sup>1</sup>, the candidate countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia<sup>1</sup>, Montenegro<sup>1</sup>, Iceland<sup>2</sup> and Serbia<sup>1</sup>, the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate countries Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina, the European Free Trade Association countries and members of the European Economic Area Liechtenstein and Norway, as well as the Republic of Moldova, Armenia, Georgia, Andorra and San Marino, align themselves with this statement.

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1 Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

2 Iceland continues to be a member of the European Free Trade Association and of the European Economic Area.