



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

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Keynote Address

**14th Alliance against Trafficking in Persons Conference
“Ethical Issues in Preventing and Combating Human Trafficking”**

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Dear Chair, Dear Secretary General
Dear Ambassadors,
Dear Colleagues,

I would like to warmly welcome you to this 14th *Alliance against Trafficking in Persons* Conference, focused on “Ethical Issues in Preventing and Combating Human Trafficking”. It is a special pleasure for me to address the *Alliance* for the first time in my capacity as the OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings.

Today I would like to address the complex reality of human trafficking. First and foremost, if we just address the very idea of what human trafficking is, simply speaking, we are talking about modern day slavery. This shocking realization hits hard when we think of the extensive history of abolition over the past 250 years, around the world and all of the progress we have apparently made as a civilization to outlaw slavery worldwide. Sadly, a complex new form of slavery has emerged; one that is folded into our society in a rather inconspicuous but insidious manner. In the past, the outright ownership of one human being by another human being became an idea, over time, that created moral outrage and when enough people found the idea, let alone the practice, reprehensible, slavery as we then knew it was abolished.

Human trafficking is the new practice of slavery for the time we live in. It takes on many forms in many different places and sectors, assumes many roles, involves many perpetrators, complicit actors, and creates many victims. It is this complexity that creates the ethical issues that we are here to address at this conference. This is because this form of slavery has become interwoven into the many layers of our society, into the legitimate economy, and it is its pervasive nature that is allowing human trafficking to flourish in our time.

Combating human trafficking becomes more complicated with each passing day, since the victims are not only working on the margins of society but, progressively are out in the mainstream economies of the world in plain sight, right under our noses. Therefore, fighting human trafficking becomes an ethical issue. How do we determine at what point labour becomes exploitative on the continuum of decent work to forced labour? How do we address the migration debate in our region and the implications of human trafficking on immigration policy and law enforcement, when trafficked persons are not identified as victims but punished for migration violations and deported? How do we protect individual rights, children’s and women’s rights, and protect them from further harm in crisis and conflict settings when high level international officials sent there to secure the peace fail to take human trafficking seriously and even reportedly joke that “boys will be boys”? How do we separate what is legitimate from what is criminal? How can we introduce the structures that the victims are shuttled into when they are constantly changing? How do we address the elements of human trafficking, the abuse of power, and abuse of a position of vulnerability, coercion, deception and exploitation of our fellow human beings? Most importantly, how can we bring your empathy to this reality and turn it into meaningful action? How can we be sure to do the right thing?

This fight, this struggle, cannot be just an exercise of how things should be in a perfect world or a discussion about wishful thinking. Rather, it should be seen as one of the cornerstones upon which

any civil society can be built. For, if the basic rights of the individuals are lost due to abuse of power, corruption, false assumptions or complacency, can a society still think of itself as civilized?

This is the challenge we are currently facing. Many in society simply fail to see the crimes being committed. Unfortunately, the driving down of labour costs across all sectors of the economy is a factor that impacts human trafficking. The search for profit is an accepted objective of the legitimate private sector, which directly and indirectly stimulates the market for cheaper and cheaper labour. This sets the stage and creates the demand for ridiculously cheap labour or what can amount to slave labour, and facilitate this high profit, low risk crime. “Legitimate” businesses create a market need that a range of actors, from unscrupulous recruiters to organized criminals, are more than happy to supply. For the criminal it is a “clean” revenue stream. For the “legitimate” business, they are able to lower their costs. This dynamic is rife with a catalogue of ethical issues. How can this be combated? How can we draw the line where criminal activity ends and legitimate business begins?

Why should we choose to look at these challenges as ethical issues? Ethics are the wellspring from which humanity began to define what is fair and moral in human activity and more importantly, how we should treat each other. When we look at what we do to each other in an ethical way, we can begin to arrive at the best possible understanding of a given situation. It is in the framing of these challenges as ethical issues that we hope to find the best approach for combating the trafficking of human beings. We invite you who are in attendance for these two days to debate these critical issues and to contribute towards bringing this picture into focus.

What is society’s attitude towards the victims of human trafficking? Many victims are misunderstood as people who have made bad life choices; or as someone who has taken a risk and is now paying the price; or as someone who is down for a short time but who will be able to pick themselves up again, or innocent or “guilty” victims who should be punished for the crimes that they were forced to carry out in the course of being trafficked. They become victims because many are simply looking for a better life and end up in a vulnerable situation where they are preyed upon. They are thrust into darkness and live an uprooted existence. The victims are silent, they do not come forward as they often do not know they are victims, or when they do, they do not see any reason to come forward when there is nothing on offer by way of compensation, but the fear of deportation, and almost certain stigmatization. Their situation has more light shed on it only when they are rescued or sadly, when they turn up dead. Sadly for many of the victims, their situation is not temporary even when they escape or are rescued, and the scars and trauma they experience may last their whole lifetime. In sum, society is reactive in its understanding of the victims of human trafficking. We need this understanding to change. We want to be proactive.

The perpetrators, who create the victims in human trafficking, the ones who prey upon the weak are without question the primary target of the laws and the Palermo protocol. They have turned off any capacity for inner reflection and have lost touch with their moral compass. They have no respect for the law as they continue to abuse their position of authority and continue to commit human rights violations day after day.

The problem is, the traffickers are human beings too, and they can be very resourceful in their actions. They know exactly where the laws are weak, how to conceal their agenda and worst of all,

they operate in an area where very little scrutiny exists; unregulated sectors with low paying jobs. They know exactly what they are doing. Through trafficking human beings, they are able to provide cheap labour to businesses. The victims are often seduced by the promise of a better life, the chance for decent job that in fact becomes a trap and in the process they lose their freedom. They, the traffickers, are able to create and sustain a forced labour continuum. To the outside eye the illicit way of business they are engaged in is almost imperceptible, due in part to the fear of the victims to speak out. Victims have been put in a compromised position that keeps them quiet and therefore easily forgotten.

In a way we have to redefine exploitation and not see it only with outrage but also coldly, as a business option. For this is how the traffickers see their victims, as commodities and not human beings. It is slavery with a new veneer, an acceptable image in the service economy, hidden in plain sight. How can we throw a spotlight on this? How can we remove the invisible cloak that the victims are forced to wear? What guidelines shall we follow?

Secretary General Lamberto Zannier, has stated that, “Ultimately, the goal is to ensure that citizens throughout the OSCE region are both safe and free,” that “the Heads of State acknowledged that the inherent dignity of the individual is at the core of comprehensive security,”¹ in the 2010 Astana Commemorative Declaration, as they did first in Helsinki 40 years ago next year. This OSCE value shared by the 57 participating States, can be the only guideline out of this complex situation, for at the core of this sentiment is the victim and the role they are forced occupy.

During these two days, we will consider how to move from policy to practice in following this guidance. We will listen to the experience of experts and practitioners and discuss how to address a range of important ethical factors in preventing and combating trafficking in human beings, such as exploring what measures the OSCE participating States, the private sector, international organizations, civil society, and other actors can take and enforce to ensure that they do not contribute to exploitative situations where goods and services are produced through trafficking in human beings. The conference will also provide a good opportunity to review and assess the impact of codes of conduct and zero tolerance policies adopted by participating States and international organizations over the past decade to prevent their potential contribution on the trafficking cycle in conflict and crisis situations. In addition, the event will focus on the critical issue of the ethical treatment and protection of trafficked persons, as it is the responsibility of every actor involved in the identification, assistance and protection of trafficked persons to treat each person in a manner that avoids further harm or re-traumatization. Finally, the conference will pay particular attention to the ethical considerations in combating trafficking in human beings for the purpose of organ removal, one of the least known forms of trafficking.

¹ <http://www.osce.org/sg/103964?download=true>.

Ethical sourcing to prevent forced labour and trafficking in human beings in the private sector

Past OSCE commitments on combating human trafficking have repeatedly emphasized the importance of addressing demand. The most recent commitment, the *Addendum to the OSCE Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings: One Decade Later*, adopted in Kyiv in December 2013 encouraged

*“[T]he private sector, trade unions and relevant civil society institutions, to promote codes of conduct to ensure the protection of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of workers throughout the supply chain in order to prevent the exploitative situations that foster trafficking in human beings”.*²

It also urged participating States to consider “*incorporating, or, as applicable, implementing, ‘zero-tolerance’ policies or other similar standards in government procurement of goods and services*”.³

As I have stated, trafficking flourishes today due to the drive of too many employers and businesses in poorly regulated and labour intensive sectors (especially involving manual labour) to cut labour costs to the point where the environment is ripe for enslavement, whether it is the exploitation of seasonal workers in the agricultural sector, labour migrants in construction or fishing, or domestic servitude. As we have heard just now from the Director General of the IOM, integrity in recruitment is one important part of the puzzle as in human trafficking schemes too often recruitment agencies are involved that charge fees, keep workers in debt bondage, and control workers through threats. Trafficked persons usually lack a valid work contract, have their documents confiscated, and are deceived when their work conditions are drastically different than those promised. Though trafficking can occur within borders, migrant workers are most vulnerable.

The OSCE has an important role to play in discussing the responsibility of States, and their duty to protect, in enacting and implementing a regulatory environment to prevent human trafficking and labour exploitation in the private sector. Though many businesses have enacted voluntary codes of conduct, it is easy to declare the measures in place to prevent THB in the work place, but much more difficult to ensure it down supply chains when raw materials (cotton, silk and wool for garments; minerals and parts for electronics and high-tech goods; cocoa and coffee beans, etc.) come from and are processed in multiple places to make a final product. We will hear the perspective of a business on working with civil society and governments, and their corporate motivations from brand risk to compliance to employee morale.

Today we will consider how much States can do to influence the private sector when their actions or business practices contribute to or directly generate profits for human traffickers. What is the responsibility of States to ensure that the taxes of your citizens do not go towards human trafficking, or that the proceeds of the profits of human trafficking are not laundered for other crimes? Why is it that sometimes it takes a tragedy such as the factory collapse at Rana Plaza in Bangladesh in 2013 for the multinational garment industry to take serious action? Or only after the

² OSCE Permanent Council, *Decision No. 1107 Addendum to the OSCE Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings: One Decade Later*, PC.DEC/1107/Corr.1 (6 December 2013), Section III, article 1.7.

³ *Ibid.*, article 1.6.

death of Chinese labour migrants in the Morecambe Bay cockling disaster off the coast of England, that the UK government enacted the Gangmasters (Licensing) Act 2004, regulating employers and labour providers in some sectors in order to prevent the exploitation of workers, requiring employers in unregulated sectors, such as agriculture, processing and packaging of products, and gathering shellfish to be licensed?

I cannot overstate the importance of government procurement regulations to strengthen protections against human trafficking, and would like to point to the ground breaking California Transparency in Supply Chains Act of 2010, and the US Executive order, as examples of the power of governments to enact measures which encourage businesses to take concerted action to monitor and check their supply chains and do the right thing to prevent trafficking. Such measures are promising in moving from corporate social responsibility to corporate social accountability for business activity, which can adversely impact human rights and how to address them.

At the lunch break today, there will be a joint CoE-OSCE side event that will review the contribution of civil society and businesses operating in OSCE participating States and elsewhere across the world to efforts to stop trafficking in human beings in the private sector, and how these efforts could be more effective. The event will include the presentation of our latest Occasional Paper: *“Ending Exploitation. Ensuring that Businesses do not Contribute to Trafficking in Human Beings: Duties of States and the Private Sector”*. Issues will be discussed, such as whether current methods used to check that businesses respect commitments made under voluntary initiatives are sufficient and how OSCE participating States could encourage businesses in their countries to develop more methods that are most likely to make a real impact. We will also hear from the Coalition of Immokalee Workers' Fair Food Program, which former US President Bill Clinton recently called “the most astonishing thing politically happening in the world we’re living in today” when he honoured the coalition for “defending the human rights of farmworkers across the United States”, and how it has made such an impact on both the food industry and the workers themselves, and how it can serve as a model for social responsibility design, monitoring, and importantly enforcement.

Our first panel in the afternoon will then address “Ethical sourcing to prevent forced labour and trafficking in human beings in the private sector”, giving an overview of the work of civil society organizations, think tanks, trade unions, and business coalitions, which work to promote: ethical trading and compliance monitoring, the protection of seafarers rights, and the power of businesses to combat human trafficking and to prevent forced labour, including through the implementation of the *UN Guiding Principles for the Implementation of ‘Protect, Respect and Remedy’ Framework*.

We will learn about good emerging practices which help ensure that the private sector does not contribute to exploitative situations where goods and services are produced through THB throughout supply chains. We will hear how consumer power brought about and sustains human rights advances made through workers at the helm of designing the Fair Food program and hear recommendations for how states, international organizations and civil society could support this new approach elsewhere in the world.

One caveat about consumer power, after many years of Fair Trade and other good faith initiatives: the ethical question seems simple, to buy a product or to boycott a brand depending on whether it is fair trade or not. However, it is difficult in practice to determine whether all goods or services of a

particular company are truly made in decent work places, with fair labour practices. For example, tomatoes picked by workers who have been trafficked may be marketed in the same containers as produce harvested by seasonal labour migrants who have not been exploited in conditions amounting to trafficking or forced labour.

Today's session will be moderated by the ILO, the leading UN agency, working with States, employers and employees to prevent forced labour and human trafficking and to promote access to justice and remedy. The ILO has developed manuals on good practice in voluntary codes adopted by private employment agency associations and how governments can monitor or regulate their activities⁴, as well as a handbook for employers and business.

Codes of conduct and zero tolerance policies in conflict and crisis situations

Another ethical issue we will address tomorrow is the impact that an international military and civilian presence can have on the demand side of the trafficking cycle in conflict/crisis situations. This impact is increasingly acknowledged by international organizations and states. While such presence normally constitutes a welcome influx of funds and stimulates the economy and the local job market, the presence can also have a negative impact on the local society. In fact, the influx of people, money and demand for services provides an easy opportunity for exploitation by traffickers and other unethical actors and individuals.

We should keep in mind that peace support operations and other international stabilizing and emergency relief efforts are usually deployed in complex scenarios with the aim of bringing security, stability and peace. These situations - characterized by instability, a lack of or insufficient rule of law and capacity of responsible institutions, and danger or the threat of violence – create fertile ground in which criminal networks flourish. In recent years, cases have been reported of direct involvement of military and civilian personnel serving in international missions and peacekeeping forces in both facilitating human trafficking as well as consuming services provided by trafficked persons. Although the majority of international staff and peacekeepers have maintained the highest standards of integrity and behaviour, when any such staff violates these standards by becoming a party to human trafficking, or even turning a blind eye, international presences can be perceived as part of the problem, rather than the solution, in the fight against human trafficking, and thus in providing security. Such misbehaviour not only entails a grave violation of the rights of trafficked persons, but also seriously jeopardizes the credibility of the peace support effort and the fulfilment of its mandate. The criminal accountability of the direct perpetrators, as well as those in command, remains a challenge, and undermines the overall mission.

Ten years ago, international organizations, such as NATO and the UN (in particular UNDPKO), and participating States, such as Norway and the US, began adopting zero tolerance policies and codes of conduct to prevent the potential negative impact of their personnel on the trafficking cycle

⁴ See ILO, *Guide to Private Employment Agencies – Regulation, monitoring and enforcement* (Geneva, 2007); and ILO, *Trafficking for Forced Labour. How to monitor the recruitment of migrant workers (Training Manual)* (Geneva, 2006), available in various languages.

in conflict and crisis situations. The OSCE addressed this problem in *Ministerial Council Decision No. 16/05*, which calls on participating States and OSCE officials to improve measures to prevent trafficking in human beings in all peace operations through training, awareness raising and enforcement of standards of conduct and legislation (accountability). The decision also calls on participating States to assist the authorities in their host countries to combat trafficking in human beings. Additionally, the OSCE Code of Conduct for Staff/Mission Members - which is applicable also in the OSCE peace missions - stresses that OSCE officials shall be exemplary in their contributions to combating trafficking in human beings.

The time has come to assess whether these zero tolerance policies have been successful in preventing trafficking in human beings and ensuring accountability for violations by persons serving in international forces and missions. As the responsibility for holding international mission staff accountable falls on States, it is also necessary to assess their individual approaches to ensuring accountability of their nationals, and how best to improve such accountability. Could the prosecution of trafficking cases be transferred to regular criminal courts, international tribunals, or some other international enforcement mechanism?

Additional challenges arise in holding private military and security companies (PMSCs) accountable. On the one hand, these companies by no means operate in a legal vacuum and the responsibilities of States related to the operations of PMSCs during armed conflicts are listed in *The Montreaux Document* (2008). On the other hand, the International Code of Conduct for Private Security Providers (ICoC) is a multi-stakeholder initiative which aims to set private security industry principles and standards based on international human rights and humanitarian law, as well as to improve accountability of the industry by establishing an external independent oversight mechanism.

The second panel of our *Alliance* conference is focused on ethical standards, the principles of conduct designed to guide common behaviour by States and International Organizations. The panel will promote a joint reflection and review of the codes of conduct and zero tolerance policies adopted by these entities to prevent their potential contribution and negative impact in the trafficking cycle, to assess how these policies have been implemented, and whether they have ensured accountability for violations by persons serving in international forces and missions, especially in conflict and crisis situations. Panellists will strive to shed light on how the current tools and initiatives can enhance the struggle against trafficking in human beings, how the positive role of international mission members may be preserved and further strengthened, and how the general discussion can be applied to the specific OSCE context, including Ukraine. I am convinced of the importance of working to develop a greater understanding of the multifaceted repercussions on human trafficking in the current crisis and to contribute to improve human security in this region where I recently worked as the Project Co-ordinator in Ukraine.

Ethical treatment of trafficked persons

According to my mandate as the Special Representative, I am tasked with assisting the OSCE participating States, upon request, in the implementation of their anti-trafficking commitments, including the recommendations of the *Action Plan* and the *Addendum to the Action Plan* adopted a

year ago in Kyiv. These OSCE commitments are multiple, but all of them, are based on a human rights-centred approach, which has always been at the heart of the OSCE's anti-trafficking efforts. Human rights norms guide the actions of governments, and were enshrined in The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the UN General Assembly on 10 December 1948, when the international community, outraged by the atrocities committed during WWII, vowed to never let them happen again.

Human rights also provide a framework for efforts to identify and respond to the needs of trafficked persons. As highlighted by the former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navi Pillay, in her forward to the OHCHR *Commentary on the Recommended Principles and Guidelines on Human Rights and Human Trafficking*: “A human rights approach to [countering] trafficking requires an acknowledgement that trafficking is, first and foremost, a violation of human rights. . . . [It] means that all those involved in anti-trafficking efforts should integrate human rights into their analysis of the problem and into their responses. This approach requires us to consider, at each and every stage, the impact that a law, policy, practice or measure may have on persons who have been trafficked and persons who are vulnerable to being trafficked. It means rejecting responses that compromise rights and freedoms.”

In other words, the rights of trafficked persons are predominant at all stages and have to be ensured within the limits of the spirit and the letter of the law and using common moral standards.

Fundamental rights and ethical principles should be fully observed when a trafficked person is first taken out of an exploitative situation, and the protection of the rights of all actors in criminal proceedings are a prerequisite for efficient and fair prosecution.

Victims of trafficking, in addition, are holders of a special set of rights including the right to be identified quickly and accurately; the right to immediate protection and support; the right to legal information and the opportunity to decide whether and how to co-operate in the prosecution of their exploiters; the right not to be detained; the right not to be prosecuted for offences that relate directly to the fact of having been trafficked; the right to be returned home safely or to benefit from another solution if safe return is not possible; and the right to an effective remedy that reflects the harm committed against them. Let me add that child victims of trafficking do have special needs that should be taken into account and the best interest of the child should be paramount at all times. All this has been clearly stated by UN and Council of Europe Conventions and by the OSCE commitments.

Ethics and a human rights-based approach argue that the primary responsibility for protecting victims of crime and enhancing their protection as well as the fight against all forms of human trafficking rests with national governments. However, it is the responsibility of every actor, including law enforcement, the judiciary, NGOs, international organizations, trade unions, journalists, the health sector as well as society as a whole, involved in the identification, assistance and protection of trafficked persons to treat each person - woman, man or child – in a manner that avoids further harm or re-traumatization. In fact, too often when a presumed victim is encountered, the actors who should identify the victim and assist and protect him or her, do not recognize the victim as such, as the victim is not the perfect victim, does not fit their stereotypes, may have a complex history, may be too traumatized to tell his or her story, the cases are not neat but complex,

and the actor may even decide that the victim is an offender (charged as an illegal labour migrant, for migrant smuggling, forced criminality, prostitution, etc.), which raises many ethical issues.

In the third session, panellists will discuss the critical issue of the ethical treatment and protection of trafficked persons and will address the following key questions: the ethical treatment of trafficked persons during the assistance process; ethical versus legal requirements during legal proceedings; protecting the privacy and data of trafficked persons and last but not least, ethical safeguards to ensure a safe return and reintegration process.

Medical ethics and trafficking in human beings for the purpose of organ removal

The last ethical issue that we will discuss at this conference, during the final panel, is that of medical ethics and trafficking in human beings for the purpose of organ removal.

Despite the fact that trafficking for organ removal is firmly within the definition of human trafficking in the Palermo Protocol, as well as in the Council of Europe Convention and the *OSCE Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings*, unfortunately less is known about this form of trafficking, and fewer resources have been devoted to addressing it worldwide. Our research paper on the subject, published in 2013, was one of the first analyses of the scale and scope of this form of trafficking in the OSCE region, based on actual cases that have been investigated or prosecuted to date. One of the findings of that paper was that the role of the medical community is an issue which deserves further attention. Medical professionals may be involved in trafficking in human beings for organ removal at various phases of the process, not necessarily all of which will be criminal: from assisting so-called “clients” or “buyers” in finding matches, actually assisting with or performing the transplant surgeries including through the assessment of the potential donor’s consent and subsequently, in providing post-operative care to both donor-victims and “clients”.

To date, medical professionals have not often been targeted for their direct or indirect role in the criminal transaction in the few investigations and prosecutions of these cases. And where doctors have been accused, for instance, they have often been able to shield themselves from liability by referral to their allegiance to an ethical standard - a medical oath - which requires them to act in the best interests of their patient. But what exactly are the ethical considerations that a medical professional should wrestle with before treating a patient where there are strong indications that he or she engaged in “transplant tourism”? To what extent does a doctor need to ensure due diligence in ensuring that the consent of a potential organ donor is in fact free, independent and informed? Lastly, what kinds of preventive action could the medical profession engage in to both raise awareness of the general public especially in areas vulnerable to exploitation, but also in terms of ensuring that ethical standards in the medical profession are as robust as possible in order to address this crime?

For the first time ever, the December 2013 *Addendum to the OSCE Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings: One Decade Later*, committed the 57 participating States to developing partnerships with medical professionals, transplant organizations and with relevant NGOs to promote policies which raise awareness on THB for the purpose of organ removal. To this end, we need new partners in the medical community and in the field of medical ethics to begin to

tackle the crucial role of medical professionals in this crime and resolve and or clarify areas of ambiguity. The breadth of the panel devoted to this issue tomorrow is a promising first step in this direction, including the participation of an expert on the phenomena and former prosecutor, a medical anthropologist and victim's service provider, a clinical psychologist, and a transplant surgeon and co-ordinator.

Closing

In conclusion, I sincerely hope that this *Alliance* conference will provide an excellent forum for gathering expertise, exchanging good practices, enhancing dialogue between national authorities and other stakeholders dealing with this issue in the OSCE region. The discussion will also contribute to recommendations on what can be done to further tackle human trafficking, including to “discourage the demand that fosters all forms of exploitation of persons, especially women and children, that leads to trafficking”, bearing in mind legal obligations, political commitments, and good practices at the national and international levels.

We each need to do our part, and I would like to take this opportunity to report that we have worked with the relevant Executive Structures, to start updating the OSCE's procurement regulations and also to issue a Staff Circular on “Requirements for the employment of private domestic staff” in accordance with the taskings of the *Addendum to the OSCE Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings: One Decade Later* in order to ensure that no activities of the OSCE or its staff contribute to any form of trafficking in human beings.

I would like to leave you with a few closing thoughts.

The individual who suffers as a result of being a victim of human trafficking is ground zero of this problem. All other issues that arise as a result of context, implementation or politics, pale in comparison with the plight of the victim. The person, the human being at the centre can easily be lost in the shuffle of how policies get executed. The victim, the person, the human being is us. She is us. He is us. The child is us. This is something that we can never lose sight of in how we develop plans of action, protocols or laws. The human at the centre must be thought of ethically first in order to respect their rights, in order to respect their humanity.

How can we effectively help the victims of human trafficking? Are we causing more harm to them when we think we are helping them? Are organized criminals the only perpetrator that robs the victims of their dignity?

Part of the problem occurs before these questions are even asked. Too many of us see victims as people in other places, as refugees, as troubled people or as persons who are simply unfortunate to be in the situation they are in. In reality, “they” are “us” and there is no getting around the fact that we begin to lack empathy as soon as we think of human trafficking victims as being different from us. There should be no difference between us and them in a civil society. We must never forget the rights of the individual, for in bad times they, the victims, suffer the most and in good times, they are the first to be stepped on.

Policies change, media attention comes and goes. The victim, the individual, remains in their predicament. The forces that expose them to trafficking and hold them in their situation are too many to list, but the end result of a human being losing their freedom and their dignity and left in a disempowered state is something that no civil society should tolerate, excuse or turn a blind eye to.

Together with my Office, I will do my utmost to work with you together, OSCE participating States, NGOs, the private sector, media, youth organizations, trade unions, and our partners in the *Alliance against Trafficking in Persons*, and many others who share the OSCE's human rights-based approach to human trafficking to create a fairer world for all of us, where each human being is treated with respect and dignity.

I would like to close with a quote from the ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle, who said, "Virtue lies in our power, and similarly so does vice; because where it is in our power to act, it is also in our power not to act..."

In this spirit, I would like to pay tribute to Kailash Satyarthi, the Indian and global activist against child labour and trafficking who has just been honoured with the Nobel Peace Prize for 2014, which he shared with Malala Yousafzai.

Thank you for your attention.