

SEMINAR
ON THE IDENTIFICATION, SEIZURE AND CONFISCATION OF ASSETS ARISING FROM HUMAN
TRAFFICKING, 17 April 2013

Head of OSCE Presence Address

Deputy Minister Noka,
Ms. Snajdrova,
Distinguished guests,

As Head of the OSCE Presence in Albania, I have the great pleasure to welcome you to this seminar jointly organized with the Ministry of Interior.

Let me first mention our colleagues from the OSCE Secretariat's Special Police Matters Unit, whose valuable contributions and support will enrich the discussions. They have strong experience in supporting the OSCE participating States to leverage anti-money laundering tools in the fight against crimes such as human trafficking.

I should also like to mention and thank the international experts from the Liechtenstein Financial Investigation Unit, the UK anti-trafficking centre and the Swiss police, as well as OPDAT. We look forward to hearing their lessons learned and best practices, given the positive results they have accomplished in the financial investigation of human trafficking.

To all of you I would like to extend our cordial welcome.

The wide participation of relevant institutions today, in my view, showcases the potential for joint responses among all institutions and actors, as well as their commitment to fighting trafficking quite significantly.

While we intend to focus on the financial aspects in this seminar, let me recall the underlying problem: human trafficking is a serious crime. It is a serious human rights violation. It causes severe harm to the trafficked victims.

Further, it is also a security threat with trans-national implications, often linked to other threats such as organized crime. As such, it is a concern not only for Albania but for the broader region and Europe as a whole, given the criminal networks involved in trafficking in human beings. This creates the need for common responses.

Unfortunately, we might even be confronted with an increase of human trafficking, given the impact of the economic crisis. As a recent EUROPOL report has noted, the poor economic

conditions have increased demand for illegal labour markets in general, a situation that is exploited by organized criminal groups.

Human trafficking is often described as a 'high profit - low risk' crime, because of the large profits generated and the challenges faced by law enforcement in detecting money flows, which are often invested in the legal economy or in other forms of trafficking.

The approach followed in this seminar, to combine the knowledge and expertise of the agencies combating money laundering with those working in the anti-trafficking sector, is therefore a most positive one. It will help exploring options so that the confiscations of proceeds will foster prevention of trafficking, by reducing the profit from criminal activities.

Secondly, this seminar should also explore how to make compensation of victims an effective remedy, either from the State fund or directly from traffickers.

In recent years, Albania has undertaken significant, commendable efforts in the fight against human trafficking at legislative and operational levels. The proposed changes to the Criminal Code should increase the prosecution rates of all forms of human trafficking, regardless of whether it occurs within or across country borders, and whether it involves the exploitation of labor, begging or prostitution.

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The fight against this crime demands more effective cooperation, at home and abroad.

Cross-border cooperation with anti-trafficking authorities of neighboring countries is essential.

The OSCE Presence in Albania is ready to assist in such efforts, also with other OSCE field missions and international partners.

Moreover, in this context of significant challenges and limited resources, inter-agency cooperation is mandatory. I think that the positive example of the recent Memorandum of Cooperation on seizure of assets from organized crime and money laundering is worth building on.

I hope that this seminar will be a helpful step towards strengthening joint actions in this area.

I look forward to constructive and inspiring discussions and the development of practical proposals.

Thank you.