



THE HOLY SEE

2012 Human Dimension Implementation Meeting

Working Session 8: Humanitarian issues and other commitments (continued).
Implementation of the OSCE Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings
Friday, September 28, 2012

Mister Chairperson,

1. The fight against human trafficking in human beings is at the heart of the OSCE's founding principle that security begins with the inherent dignity of the human person. In fact, the late Blessed Pope John Paul II once stated: "The trade in human persons constitutes a shocking offense against human dignity and grave violation of fundamental human rights. Already the Second Vatican Council had pointed to 'slavery, prostitution, the selling of women and children, and disgraceful working conditions where people are treated as instruments of gain rather than free and responsible persons' as 'infamies' which 'poison human society, debase their perpetrators' and constitute 'a supreme dishonour to the Creator' (cf. Pastoral Constitution of the Church *Gaudium et Spes*, 27). Such situations are an affront to fundamental values, which are shared by all cultures and peoples, values rooted in the very nature of the human person. ... Who can deny that the victims of this crime are often the poorest and most defenseless members of the human family, the 'least' of our brothers and sisters? ... The disturbing tendency to treat prostitution as a business or industry not only contributes to the trade in human beings, but is itself evidence of a growing tendency to detach freedom from the moral law and to reduce the rich mystery of human sexuality to a mere commodity" (Pope John Paul II, Letter to Archbishop Jean-Louis Tauran on the Occasion of the International Conference "Twenty-First Century Slavery — The Human Rights Dimension to Trafficking in Human Beings", 15 May 2002).

2. Trafficking in human beings, especially of women and minors, and not just for sexual exploitation but also for labour exploitation and domestic servitude, has become a powerful global business involving many countries of origin, transit and destination. The victims of trafficking in persons are estimated at almost three million a year, a lucrative trade that generates an annual income of over thirty billion U.S. dollars. What is new is the globalization of this trade, the development of a global market which exploits the extreme poverty and vulnerability, especially of many women and minors who try to escape intolerable conditions of misery and violence.

3. The Holy See believes that strengthening the legal framework in the fight against trafficking in human beings is an effective way to combat and end this most heinous crime. In this regard, the Holy See believes would like to make the

following recommendations:

- that OSCE participating States further refine their legislation concerning the fight against trafficking in human beings, safeguarding more effectively the rights and the dignity of the victims, especially women and minors;

- that cooperation among OSCE participating States be facilitated so that the magistrates of those participating States might be able to ensure continuity in their activities of fighting and stopping trafficking in human beings. The adoption of common measures in the OSCE participating States should lead to the establishment of relations of trust among the various actors and the various agencies charged with monitoring THB activities and with safeguarding the victims and their families;

- that the human victims of THB be placed in conditions where they can feel that they are effectively protected and ensured of their rights. This can be done by making the most of civil society, including Catholic and other religious organizations. In this sense, it is important that the human victims of THB are helped to understand their status of being a victim, because this will lead them not only to recognize the violence they have suffered, but it will also render them more cooperative in eventual criminal investigations and legal processes. It is also important that the victims enjoy the widest legal opportunities of remaining on the territory where the crime has been committed. Such permission should not be connected only to the trial portion of a legal/criminal process or conceded only upon the filing of criminal complaint or accusation. It would also be timely if legislation included provisions for courses of professional work formation for the victims and, if they so desire, dispositions for them to work in the country where they find themselves, instead of having to return to their homelands;

- finally, on the one hand, the current economic and financial crisis is slowing-down migratory flows while, on the other, it is facilitating various forms of exploitation, including THB. This problem should be analyzed with greater attention from the participating States in order to avoid that the traffickers profit from weaknesses and ambiguities in the current international economic order.

4. My Delegation would also like to seize this occasion to reaffirm that the Catholic Church has long condemned the scourge of trafficking in human persons and is deeply concerned for these vulnerable and innocent victims of this example of man's inhumanity to man. As a concrete example, I would like to mention *Caritas Internationalis* - a confederation of 164 Catholic relief, development and social service organizations, which operates in over 200 countries and territories worldwide. Collectively and individually its mission is to work to build a better world, especially for the poor and oppressed, and a significant part of its activities is dedicated to the fight against trafficking in human beings.

Thank you, Mister Chairperson.