

21 May 2010

ENGLISH

Original: ITALIAN *English translation*

**STATEMENT BY MONSIGNOR MICHAEL W. BANACH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE HOLY SEE,
AT THE 810th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

20 MAY 2010

**RE: REPORT BY THE SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE AND
CO-ORDINATOR FOR COMBATING TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS**

Mister Chairperson:

1. The Delegation of the Holy See willingly joins the previous speakers in extending a warm welcome to the Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, Ms. Maria Grazia Giammarinaro, on the occasion of her first formal appearance before the Permanent Council. My Delegation would also like to thank her for her report which outlines her vision for the work of her Office.

2. In fact, her thoughtful and detailed reflections on policy implications in the three major areas of action of her Office, as well as on the principal thematic priorities in which her Office is engaged is a hopeful manifestation of the strong commitment on the part of the participating States to put an end to the scourge of trafficking in persons, which has appropriately been called the new form of slavery. There have been many concrete initiatives taken to stem this horrific activity whereby persons, mostly women and children, are either lured away from their homes and families by false promises of a better future, or simply abducted from their homes, only to be caught up in a cycle of sexual abuse, violence, and/or forced labour, most often accompanied by unspeakable living conditions and the threat of bodily harm, torture, and death on a daily basis.

Such initiatives include education and awareness campaigns, legislation aimed prosecuting traffickers, and the implementation of more effective mechanisms for international cooperation in fighting this tragic human problem. The Delegation of the Holy See commends these valiant efforts, both those of governments of NGOs and, in a particular way the engagement and commitment of many religious institutions and organizations, that have made it a priority to offer safe havens, healing centres and places of care for the victims of trafficking. As these religious groups are active on the ground, they have a wealth of experience and information. Building coalitions with religious organizations dedicated to fight against trafficking in human persons is a way of strengthening outreach to victims of trafficking with support, assistance, and rehabilitation.

3. We should acknowledge the progress that has been made in the fight and lament the fact that still so much more must be done. In this regard, the Holy See would like to draw attention to the desperate need for the human family to face squarely the demand side of the problem of trafficking in persons. In his Encyclical Letter, *Caritas in Veritate*, Pope Benedict XVI wrote that: “*The Church forcefully maintains [this] link between life ethics and social ethics, fully aware that ‘a society lacks solid foundations when, on the one hand, it*

asserts values such as the dignity of the person, justice and peace, but then, on the other hand, radically acts to the contrary by allowing or tolerating a variety of ways in which human life is de-valued and violated, especially where it is weak or marginalised" (no. 15).

An illustration of the significance of this problem is offered by the phenomenon of international tourism, which can be a major factor in economic development and cultural growth, but can also become an occasion for exploitation and moral degradation. In many cases, alongside otherwise legitimate economic opportunities, including education, there are immoral or even perverted forms of conduct, as in the case of so-called sex tourism, to which many human beings are sacrificed even at a young age. It is sad to note that this activity often takes place with the knowledge of local governments, with silence from those in the tourists' countries of origin, and with the complicity of tour operators.

The "industry" of buying and selling people, mostly women and children, as "things" to be used and tossed aside in the interest of greed, selfish pleasures, or cheap labour is a dark world. The *OSCE Platform for Action Against Human Trafficking* offers a sound basis so that individuals and nations may rise above this lurid environment. Yet, there is a need for a more effective network of political mechanisms, economic institutions, and international cooperation, all of which must be rooted in one of the most striking aspects of any discussion of human rights: respect for life. Only an authentic effort at placing respect for life and human dignity at the centre of our concerns will prompt us to seek what is right and just, and to step outside the restricted sphere of our own self-interest and act for the good of others.

In this sense, the Holy See believes that it is imperative to address the cultural and economic factors contributing to human trafficking, which include legalized prostitution, pornography, corruption, poverty, unemployment, and underdevelopment and to take pro-active measures to put traffickers and exploiters out of business, to restore societies wherein human dignity and respect for all persons is not only recognized but upheld through the rule of law and manifested in cultural realities.

Mister Chairperson,

4. Before concluding, I would like to draw attention to the fact that Pope Benedict's general intention for prayer for the month of May is: "That the shameful and monstrous commerce in human beings, which sadly involves millions of women and children, may be ended."

My Delegation would like to reiterate the commitment of the Catholic Church to uphold the dignity of every human life, especially the most vulnerable. And I would like to assure Ms. Giammarinaro of our full support in her efforts to eliminate the scourge of trafficking, in particular of women and children, prostitution, and forced labour.

Thank you, Mister Chairperson.