



EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Permanent Council No. 1326
Vienna, 29 July 2021**

**EU Statement on the World Day against Trafficking in
Persons**

FINAL (503 words)

1. On the 30th of July, we mark the World Day against Trafficking in Persons. This is an opportunity to raise awareness of the situation of victims of Human Trafficking and to reiterate our commitment to work together to combat this global crime. The EU commends this year's theme "Victim's Voices Lead the Way", which puts victims of human trafficking at the centre of the campaign and highlights the importance of listening to and learning from victims of human trafficking.
2. The World Day against Trafficking in Persons is also the final day of UNODC's month long "Blue Heart Campaign". This global awareness-raising initiative seeks to encourage involvement of all stakeholders, to inspire action and help prevent this heinous crime and its impact on society. The UN Voluntary Trust Fund for Victims of Trafficking in Persons provides humanitarian, legal, and financial aid to victims of trafficking in persons through established channels of assistance including governmental, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations across the globe.
3. The fight against trafficking in human beings is also a core element of the OSCE's mandate. The 21st High-level Alliance against Trafficking in Persons Conference in June allowed for a fruitful exchange of views and sharing of

experience amongst participating States, law enforcement officials, victims of trafficking, civil society and other relevant actors. The discussions stressed the importance of tackling demand as a root cause of trafficking in human beings, especially discouraging the demand that fosters trafficking both online and offline for the purposes of labour and sexual exploitation, particularly women and children.

4. The EU welcomes the recent launch of a breakthrough study on gender and human trafficking by the Office of the Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, in order to examine and better understand and frame the gender aspects of human trafficking.
5. In April, the European Commission adopted a new strategy on Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings (2021-2025), focusing on prevention, justice, protection and empowering victims. The European Union promotes a comprehensive approach when addressing trafficking in human beings, which is human rights-based, victim-centred, gender-sensitive and age-specific. The EU continues to insist on the importance of addressing the gender dimension of human trafficking.
6. The Covid-19 pandemic has had, and will continue to have, severe consequences in the field of trafficking in human beings. A new study released by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) illustrates the devastating impact of COVID-19 on victims and survivors of human trafficking and highlights the increased targeting and exploitation of children. The Covid-19 pandemic has further exacerbated existing disparities and as a result the most vulnerable have become even more at risk of trafficking. In this regard, the UN Trust Fund for Victims of Human Trafficking, managed by UNODC, responded to COVID-19 by providing support to 10 NGOs across the globe.
7. The EU and its Member States remain committed to working closely with international partners to promote adherence to international legal standards on combatting trafficking in persons and implementation of OSCE commitments.

The Candidate Countries REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, SERBIA* and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA countries ICELAND and LIECHTENSTEIN, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, GEORGIA, ANDORRA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

* Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.