

**Cooperation to Prevent Trafficking in Human Beings
in the Mediterranean Region**

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Statement by

Ambassador Thomas Greminger / Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the OSCE, United Nations and International Organizations in Vienna / Chair of the Contact Point Group of the Mediterranean Partner Countries

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

I am honoured to speak to you today in my recently assumed function as Chairperson of the Contact Group with the Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation.

The Mediterranean Sea has always been an important connection between the Middle East and Northern Africa and Europe. On the positive side, this involved trade and cooperation between the different nations at the shores of the Mediterranean. On the negative side, the Mediterranean still serves also as an important route for trafficking in human beings, arms, drugs, and other illegal activities. We have all seen the awful pictures of overloaded, fragile boats full of women, men and children in hope of a better future. Thousands of people risk their lives every year with the goal to find a living in Europe. Not all of those people are or become actual victims of trafficking, but all of them are at risk of being exploited. Many of them will arrive in Europe with immensely high debts, money they owe to their smugglers. This, in combination with other factors makes them particularly vulnerable to become trafficking victims.

We cannot stop persons from trying to find a living in Europe. However, we can try to strengthen our mutual collaboration – countries of origin, countries of transit and countries of destination – in order to be able to live up to our international obligations and fight trafficking of persons beyond mere words. Partnership is one of the keys to successful action against trafficking. It is one of the so-called four P's or pillars of any anti-trafficking strategy – that are: Prevention, Protection, Prosecution and Partnership. This forum is, in our view, an excellent set up to initiate the dialogue and to strengthen partnership.

A bit more than one year back, at the OSCE Ministerial Council in Vilnius, the OSCE's role as a platform for dialogue and cooperation for a comprehensive response to human trafficking in all its forms was reconfirmed. The participating States underscored their determination to implement the OSCE Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings and to reach out and strengthen their partnerships in order to combat trafficking in human beings. This approach has to be followed-up.

We see a shared responsibility towards prevention, prosecution, and protection: On the one side, there is the need in the destination countries for better protection of the rights of those who are at risk of being exploited or who are exploited - in particular of undocumented migrants. For example, we will have to take a close look at issues such as effective access to justice including payment of compensation of missing salaries and damages. This will contribute to preventing re-trafficking and can be an effective means of deterrence for those who exploit. On the other side, there is the need for countries of origin to ensure social protection and decent employment opportunities to provide alternatives to migration.

An important topic we propose to address in this group is domestic servitude. Domestic servitude is a problem that concerns all of us – in the OSCE and the countries of the Mediterranean Partners. We suggest using this partnership to share good practises and develop strategic approaches against the exploitation of persons in private or diplomatic households. The OSCE (Office of the Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings) has knowledge to offer and in Switzerland we are ready to share our experience and learn from others.

I am planning to dedicate a meeting of the Mediterranean Contact Group in Vienna, where the permanent representatives of the Partner countries and the participating States reunite, in order to follow-up on today's workshop. Therefore, I ask you to formulate concrete policy recommendations today which we can take up to the political level and then hopefully also to an implementation stage. In parallel, we should also develop concrete projects, together with the Office of the Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings.

In conclusion, I thank Mrs Maria-Grazia Giammarinaro and her able team for the excellent organisation of the workshop and wish us all an interactive discussion which will hopefully bear concrete fruits later on in the year.

Thank you.