



United States Mission to the OSCE

Session 8

Humanitarian issues and other commitments,

including:

Implementation of the OSCE Action Plan to

Combat Trafficking of Human Beings

As prepared for delivery by Ambassador Avis T. Bohlen
OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting
Warsaw, September 28, 2012

The United States strongly supports the goal of combating trafficking in persons through prosecution, protection, and prevention as articulated in the OSCE Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings. This year the International Labor Organization released new estimates indicating that there are more than three million victims of human trafficking in the OSCE region at any given time, most of whom are women and girls. This is an untenable situation. We must all continue our efforts; an aggressive implementation of the OSCE Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings is clearly imperative. Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings Maria Grazia Giammarinaro has been unflagging in her efforts to assist participating States to achieve the goals of the Action Plan, and we are indebted to her for her efforts.

Several OSCE States made great strides toward the fundamental goals set out in our shared OSCE commitments. For example, both Sweden and the Czech Republic strengthened their activities to stem labor trafficking. Sweden identified more labor trafficking victims than sex trafficking victims, and involved a wide variety of government officials, such as tax inspectors, in the fight against trafficking. The Czech Republic introduced a suite of labor regulations to prevent workers' exploitation. However, Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, and Russia did not make sufficient efforts to fight human trafficking for either sexual or labor exploitation within their borders.

Bosnia conducted specialized anti-trafficking training of Bosnian troops prior to their deployment abroad on international peacekeeping missions; however the government did not demonstrate appreciable progress in its overall domestic anti-trafficking efforts. While courts in local jurisdictions convicted some trafficking offenders, the Bosnian government did not investigate, prosecute, or convict any trafficking offenders in 2011. Accounts of police and other government officials' complicity in human trafficking continue to emerge from Bosnia, including the exploitation of victims, willfully ignoring trafficking offenses, and actively protecting traffickers in return for payoffs. Bosnia is not the only country where government corruption is turning officials who should be protectors into predators. Several European countries, including Moldova and Ukraine, also need to find the will to hold public officials accountable for complicity in trafficking.

The U.S. knows from experience that trafficking investigations, prosecutions, and convictions require long, hard work. Ensuring that the trafficker is put behind bars for a significant period of

time is of the utmost importance. We encourage all countries throughout Europe to investigate and prosecute cases vigorously and to sentence convicted trafficking offenders to sentences commensurate with the serious nature of this crime.

Victim identification and care are also critical for helping victims move on and prevent them from being re-trafficked. Bosnia's Office of the State Coordinator provided victim identification training to staff members in day centers frequented by Roma and other groups vulnerable to trafficking; however, sufficient funds for NGOs to provide victim care and assistance are needed.

The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (OSCE PA) has been active in promoting policy development and new initiatives in our efforts to combat human trafficking throughout the OSCE region—particularly in the areas of prevention and victim identification. At its most recent session, the OSCE PA passed a resolution on Protecting Vulnerable Populations from Human Trafficking, calling on participating States to ensure that law enforcement officers are trained to recognize trafficking victims, particularly among vulnerable populations. The resolution also called for improved access to rehabilitative care, as these vulnerabilities often prevent victim access to care, and for participating States that have not yet done so to establish and widely disseminate a national trafficking hotline to inform victims about services. The OSCE PA recently adopted best practices for combating human trafficking in the travel industry, which includes training flight crews and hotel staff on how to appropriately respond to a suspected victim of human trafficking on plane or in a hotel. In addition, the OSCE PA has called on governments to adopt procurement policies and procedures that screen out businesses that may use trafficked labor, or products made by trafficked labor.

Finally, in an effort to address the situation of Roma in the OSCE region, the resolution called on participating States to establish in major cities special, Roma-oriented task forces composed of Romani NGOs, Romani mediators and Romani community representatives, along with participating State law enforcement, anti-trafficking authorities, and social services representatives. The task force approach has transformed the trafficking response in many communities in the United States. At present, the United States has 40 task forces established in communities where there is most need. These task forces bring together national and local police, social services, faith-based organizations, non-governmental organizations, and many other entities that work to find victims, deliver services, and prosecute traffickers. The task force approach has maximized our limited resources, minimized duplication, and, most importantly, created local teams to ensure that victims are identified and receive the care that they need to assist with prosecution and to move on with their lives.

We welcome the upcoming conference of the Alliance against Trafficking entitled, "An Agenda for Prevention of Human Trafficking: Non-Discrimination and Empowerment," which will undoubtedly further enhance our anti-trafficking strategy by focusing prevention efforts on those most likely to be trafficked. It is important for us to do everything we can to ensure limited government resources are strategically targeted at preventing the vulnerable from becoming or remaining victims. Community task force coordination with vulnerable groups, law enforcement focus on vulnerable groups, and educational outreach to vulnerable groups are key ways that participating States can decrease victimization and increase victim identification and rehabilitation.