

The OSCE Secretariat bears no responsibility for the content of this document and circulates it without altering its content. The distribution by OSCE Conference Services of this document is without prejudice to OSCE decisions, as set out in documents agreed by OSCE participating States.

PC.DEL/1843/21
8 December 2021

ENGLISH
Original: RUSSIAN

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY
MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE
RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE 1346th MEETING OF THE OSCE
PERMANENT COUNCIL**

25 November 2021

**In response to the report by the OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for
Combating Trafficking in Human Beings**

Mr. Richey,

We thank you for your statement and the detailed overview of your work. The report contains statistics that warrant the closest attention and other useful information. Also of interest are the four areas of work on which you intend to concentrate in the immediate term.

We continue to support your Office's work. The countering of trafficking is one of the most depoliticized areas at the OSCE. Which is understandable, since, as is known, every year around 25 million people fall victim to those who trade in "human commodities". That is a colossal number, but the real figure could be substantially higher, given that it is not only those directly caught up in such a difficult situation who are harmed, but also their families and friends. You rightly note that trafficking in human beings is not simply a crime but a serious "societal problem" and even an "open wound" festering on the surface of our world.

A joint approach to tackling this phenomenon is particularly called for in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. It is difficult to overestimate the pandemic's impact on trafficking. Many people have found themselves without work, children have lost their parents or guardians, and there has been a drastic increase in the number of instances in which modern technologies have been used to recruit potential victims of traffickers. Moreover, the law enforcement authorities often do not manage to keep up with the changing trends in criminal conduct, notably with the new patterns of use of information and communication technologies.

In such challenging circumstances, the task of establishing effective preventive measures has come to the forefront – in particular, measures of a socio-economic nature. These measures include developing and promoting a social protection and health system appropriate to the new realities, supporting low-income families and women, and ensuring access to education for all segments of the population, above all for the most vulnerable. After all, trafficking poses a threat to the lives and health principally of those who are already in a difficult situation – that is, children, refugees, migrants and people living below the poverty line.

In general, the importance of a comprehensive approach when countering trafficking should not be forgotten. For we are talking about such crimes as the illegal removal of or trafficking in human organs, tissues and cells, money laundering, corruption, the creation of an underground economy and cybercrime. A widespread and at the same time easily disguised form of trafficking in human beings is trafficking for sexual exploitation, which affects mainly women and girls. Men and boys can also be subjected to such exploitation, though they are rather more frequently victims of trafficking for the purposes of forced labour.

Combating the demand for “human commodities”, which as before remains at a steadily high level, continues to be a separate challenge in its own right.

Mr. Richey,

You incorporate “gender aspects” in considerable detail. Here, of course, it is important to avoid bias, as that could divert attention from the reality on the ground. In each specific incident it is essential to take all circumstances into account, and in the case of crimes against girls and boys to act with the best interests of the child in mind.

In closing, we once again emphasize the OSCE’s contribution to international efforts to counter trafficking in human beings. The Organization boasts a robust set of relevant commitments. It is important to focus on their implementation.

We sincerely wish you, Mr. Richey, and your entire team the best of health and every success in your work.

Thank you for your attention.