



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to the Special Representative on Combating Trafficking in Persons, Dr. Helga Konrad

As delivered by Ambassador Julie Finley
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
March 30, 2006

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

We welcome Dr. Konrad to the Permanent Council, and thank her for her report.

We can all agree that combating trafficking in human beings is a very important part of OSCE's work. It is a cross-dimensional issue that requires a significant amount of coordination. We are glad to hear the "Mechanism" is actively working to strengthen coordination both within the OSCE and between the OSCE and other International Organizations as well as NGOs.

We want to add that we strongly support the work of the Anti-Trafficking Assistance Unit as well, and hope that the Special Representative relies, as do we, on their expertise.

Dr. Konrad has raised some concrete issues for States to consider, including providing temporary residency for trafficking victims, something the United States already does. We would be very interested in hearing more from Dr. Konrad on what actions the OSCE itself can take to assist States in meeting their OSCE commitments concerning trafficking. What strategic priorities should the OSCE set for such assistance?

We note the Special Representative reports she visited or consulted with 40 participating States. We would like to see more reporting from these visits, as well as receive more information on concrete follow-up and assistance resulting from them. We see no reason why all of the reports with any responses should not be available to all participating States, and we hope they could be circulated.

We support the work being done together with the Training Unit to ensure OSCE staff understand what trafficking is and what their responsibilities are under the Code of Conduct for OSCE Officials and the related staff instructions.

In this respect, we look forward to updating the Code of Conduct and Staff Instruction 11 as tasked by the Ljubljana Ministerial. We believe it is crucial that our well-meaning efforts in the field do not contribute to the problem of trafficking.

We also look forward to the first report on progress made under the Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings. We believe this will help strengthen OSCE strategy, prioritization, and coordination in combating trafficking.

Finally, I would like to raise two issues. During the Winter Session of the Parliamentary Assembly, we discussed the problem of re-trafficking. There is an increasing amount of evidence, as has been pointed out, that trafficking victims re-enter the cycle, sometimes knowingly and sometimes through coercion. We do need to look carefully at the reasons why this is happening - whether out of economic desperation, vulnerability, repatriation of victims into the hands of the traffickers, or other problems - and find concrete ways to stop this vicious cycle.

The second issue is that we can't ignore the demand side of trafficking, including as it relates to sex trafficking and trafficking for forced and bonded labor. Our anti-trafficking efforts will not be successful unless we also address the factors and root causes that foster demand and make women and children more vulnerable to trafficking. State Parties to the United Nations Trafficking in Persons Protocol have an obligation, under Article 9, to discourage demand. This past January, the European Parliament called on member states to implement measures to address demand such as problems resulting from prostitution and its relationship to trafficking. Last year, the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women adopted a resolution calling on governments and civil society to step up efforts to discourage demand for trafficked women and girls for all forms of exploitation.

In conclusion, I would simply like to repeat that we support strongly the OSCE's work to combat trafficking in human beings, and we would like to see that work further strengthened. We hope the next report will address the issues of re-trafficking and of demand.

Thank you.