

THE VIENNA FORUM TO FIGHT HUMAN TRAFFICKING
13-15 February 2008
Vienna, Austria

AIDE MEMOIRE

The Virtual Forum

BACKGROUND

The United Nations Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking (UN.GIFT) aims to mobilize state and non-state actors to eradicate human trafficking by (i) reducing both the vulnerability of potential victims and the demand for exploitation in all its forms; (ii) ensuring adequate protection and support to those who do fall victim, and (iii) supporting the efficient prosecution of the criminals involved, while respecting the fundamental human rights of all persons.

In carrying out its mission UN.GIFT will increase the knowledge and awareness on human trafficking; promote effective rights-based responses; build capacity of state and non-state actors; and foster partnerships for joint action against human trafficking.

As part of UN.GIFT, The Vienna Forum to Fight Human Trafficking will be held at United Nations Headquarters in Vienna from 13 to 15 February 2008. The Vienna Forum will focus on the three overriding themes of vulnerability, impact and action, which will be discussed in a plenary session and a series of panels, workshops and special events.

Based on the understanding that human trafficking cannot be met by governments, businesses, academia or civil society alone and that cooperation is key to effectively combat this universal crime, the Vienna Forum aims to bring together all relevant stakeholders to address the most pressing issues in human trafficking today.

Representatives of Member States, the international community including UN agencies and regional organizations, civil society, the business community, academia, and the media each have an important contributions to make to the global fight against trafficking. Therefore, at the Vienna Forum, particular emphasis will be put on enabling participants from different backgrounds to share and assess existing data and research, raise awareness, and build upon existing and foster new partnerships.

At the Vienna Forum, a number of interactive sessions, special events and networking tools will provide interested participants with the possibility of extending their global network of individuals and organizations active in the fight against human trafficking. A Virtual Forum will allow attendees to meet virtually before the Vienna Forum, to discuss human trafficking issues physically during the event and to keep in contact virtually after the Vienna Forum.

The Virtual Forum is organized by UNODC.

CONTEXT

Virtual networks have become increasingly popular over the past few years. Initially developed for a private business environment, other sectors have soon come to appreciate the advantages of virtual networks. Virtual networks do away with many geographical constraints, enable people with common interests to communicate, regardless of location, and are exceptionally cost and time effective.

These advantages were also recognized by the United Nations. The first virtual network linking women in politics throughout the world was launched at the beginning of this year and UNDESA has developed a virtual Marketplace for International Migration and Development Services, for their Global Forum held in Brussels 9-11 July 2007, which was very much appreciated by participants of this event.

Recognizing the importance of further strengthening existing cooperation and fostering new partnerships in the fight against human trafficking, UN.GIFT wishes to offer interested participants a virtual network. This tool would enable a number of stakeholders to present their ideas, projects and expertise to a wider audience and to interact with other individuals and/or organizations.

The Virtual Forum is a password secured Internet platform accessible to participants of the Vienna Forum to Fight Human Trafficking who wish to do so. Organizations would be asked to identify a focal point, who would then contact the Vienna Forum organizers to obtain a password and post their requests for technical assistance, on-line project ideas and project information in a specific region.

Certain project ideas could be elaborated via Internet prior to the Vienna Forum and discussed in detail at the event. Participants of the Virtual Forum who wish to physically meet and discuss the posted requests and possible technical assistance, will be provided with office space at the Vienna Forum.

OBJECTIVES

The objective of the Virtual Forum is to provide participants with a global platform to exchange knowledge and discuss project ideas in different geographical regions. This platform will be operational about two months before the Vienna Forum and will continue to be a virtual place of exchange after the Vienna Forum.

EXPECTED OUTPUTS

The Virtual Forum provides participants of the Vienna Forum with a computer-based tool to expand their network of individuals and organizations active in the fight against trafficking. Through this expanded network more knowledge and experience can be drawn from when

formulating new project ideas. Also, overlapping of projects in a certain region could be avoided and efforts combined. The expected outcome is a number of cooperatively developed projects carried out in partnership.

STRUCTURE AND CONTENT

In principal, there will be one portal, with preferential entry possibilities for (a) government representatives and service providers such as international organizations and limited access (b) for Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and the private sector. Government representatives and International Organizations could view all entries made on the Virtual Forum, where as Civil Society Organizations and the private sector would be granted access only to a part of the exchange platform. The Virtual Forum will provide participants with an extended network of anti-human trafficking practitioners and will also raise awareness about the various, different projects developed by different agencies/organizations and in the different regions.

THEMES

(a) Governments in need of certain technical assistance could post their specific requests and wait for service providers to answer with a customer tailored assistance idea. International organizations could post their pipeline projects to make them known to potential donors and/or to see if similar projects are being planned or carried out in the same region. Government representatives interested in funding a specific project could enter the Virtual Forum and scan the site for project ideas they might want to get involved in.

(b) CSOs could present their project ideas to the private sector and vice versa to complement each other when developing anti human trafficking activities in the field. The private sector wanting to engage in anti-human trafficking work could build on CSOs knowledge and experience and work in close cooperation with the organizations at the forefront of fighting trafficking. CSOs could consult their network of private sector companies on certain corporate aspects.

PARTICIPANTS

All participants of the Vienna Forum can also participate in the Virtual Forum. Government representatives, the international community including UN agencies and regional organizations, civil society organizations, the business community, academia, the media and individuals working to fight human trafficking can obtain a password and participate in the virtual community.

WORKING LANGUAGE

The working language of the Virtual Forum will be English, both on the internet as well as at the personal meetings at the Vienna Forum.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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