

## **S T A T E M E N T**

**of Dr. Hijran Huseynova,  
Chairperson of the State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs on “Role  
of women leaders in the fight human trafficking”**

*Vienna February 14*

**Ladies and gentlemen, distinguished guests,**

First of all, I would like to express my deep gratitude to the organizers of this event, the importance of subject of which is undeniable and urges immediate action of the world community.

Indeed, as it is widely recognized the ‘slavery of modern times’, trafficking in human beings, has always been and still is on the agenda of the United Nations and its member states. Nevertheless, the level of acuteness and overwhelmingness of this crime still urges more cooperation in joining efforts to combat trafficking. Practice of numerous anti trafficking actions both on national and international level demonstrate that involvement of all segments of society be it state or non-state bodies, as well as private sector representatives is of utmost importance to act in a more coherent way.

It is with a great deal of satisfaction that I point out that the concept of the UN Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking (UN.GIFT) meets all the above mentioned requirements. Bringing women leaders with different backgrounds and from various regions of the world together to initiate action against trafficking perfectly reflects its multi-dimensional character. It is my firm belief that the role of women leaders in revealing root causes of trafficking in human beings, analyzing vulnerabilities and mobilizing resources for joint action is indisputable. Their contribution to the UN.GIFT will considerably enhance effectiveness of efforts of global action against trafficking.

Here I would like to draw attention of the distinguished audience to one of the factors that enormously complicate fighting trafficking in Azerbaijan. That is the existence of conflict with neighboring Armenia as a result of which over 20% of Azerbaijani territory is currently under occupation and more than a million of population are IDPs and refugees. A painful fact is that more than half of them are women and children, who sometimes become easy targets of human traffickers due to their social and economical vulnerability. In addition, existence of uncontrolled territories that are under occupation of military forces complicates tracing and the punishing perpetrators of trafficking crime.

As it is stated in the aims of Global Initiative raising awareness of people about this problem is the first and foremost measure that bears preventive character. For instance, as many would agree the most vulnerable group of society who fall victims of trafficking are women and young girls. As a rule they do not have sufficient knowledge of trafficking, how it is conducted and how they can avoid becoming victims of human traffickers. Thus in such cases they are unaware of their rights which makes it difficult for them to seek help.

Whereas, increasing level of awareness of people, especially of women about trafficking, forced labor and other related crimes we may avoid future complication of this situation. Thus, we deem it necessary to direct considerable efforts to raising awareness on the grass roots level with broader geographical focus.

In order to facilitate this process in the provinces of our countries, I think it would be very useful to establish local Councils, where religious leaders, local community leaders, local authority representatives and even celebrities will be involved. These individuals usually have more ability to influence public opinion, promote activity of these Councils and mobilize people to beware of trafficking. Special attention should be devoted to involving women leaders in this process and raising awareness of young women of the consequences of trafficking and exploitation. It will facilitate the process of achievement of the goals that are set out by the global Forum.

We have already started this activity in our country. Some projects are being implemented jointly by state bodies and non-governmental organizations. We plan to conduct numerous awareness campaigns in this direction. One of the projects that we conduct is the project titled “XXI century without violence against women”. This project is being conducted in cooperation with Heydar Aliyev Foundation, UNFPA and our Committee. Though the main object of this project is to eliminate violence against women, we also pay great attention to on the problem of trafficking in human beings.

Finally, I would like to reiterate readiness of the Committee that I represent to assist in all possible ways the women leaders involved in the UN.GIFT in their important task. I hope and expect this global Forum will strengthen world wide cooperation in combating human trafficking.

**Thank you for your attention.**