

Statement by
Secretary of the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania
Mr. Stanislovas Liutkevičius
at the Vienna Forum to Fight Human Trafficking
(13 February 2008, Vienna, Austria)

Mr. Chairman,

Ladies and gentlemen,

First of all, on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania I would like to thank all those who have supported the UN Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking and contributed to the organising this significant event in Vienna.

Problems concerning trafficking in human beings are global and exist regardless social-economic and political development, size of population or geographical location of state. At the same time trafficking in human beings evolves its forms and extent, assumes more cruelty and humiliation.

It is our responsibility to find an appropriate response to this inhuman phenomenon. First of all, we have to recognize it as a serious violation of human rights. We also have to admit that governments can not fight this phenomenon alone. The effective fight requires concrete actions from both governmental and non-governmental actors. Therefore I would like to welcome the initiatives to join efforts of all social players: national governments, international organizations, civil society and private sector.

In this context, let me make a few remarks on Lithuania's latest experience

We recognize the great importance of the international co-operation. Lithuania is a party to most international instruments concerning trafficking in human beings; its legal acts comply with international standards set out by the European Union, the United Nations and other international organizations. Just yesterday Lithuania has signed Council of Europe Convention on Actions against Trafficking in Human Beings.

Lithuania also pays great attention to the role of regional cooperation, which gives an opportunity to tackle the problem from the bases. It is vital to strengthen contribution of the regions in our common fight against trafficking in human beings. One of the means could be preparation and conclusion of bilateral and multilateral agreements between countries of origin, transit and destination in the framework of international conventions.

Seeking to promote a regional approach in combating trafficking in human beings as well as to enhance the cooperation between different actors, Lithuania in October 2007 hosted Vilnius Conference "Preventing Trafficking in Human Beings: Challenges and Solutions". The conference was jointly organized by the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe and United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in the framework of the United Nations Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking. This conference focused its attention on prevention of human trafficking, namely on the role of the media and other non-traditional stakeholders – the business-community and educational institutions in fighting human trafficking. This event gave us a possibility to contribute to the United Nations Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking.

Another example of national initiatives in fighting trafficking in human beings is the implementation of the second national Programme for the Prevention and Control of Trafficking in Human Beings for 2005–2008. The purpose of the Programme is to develop and implement a target oriented, long-term and complex system of measures to prevent and control trafficking in human beings.

One of the most important elements of systematical approach is the coordination of measures taken by government and non-governmental institutions. In pursuance of it, each year the report on situation of trafficking in human beings in Lithuania is being prepared by an independent human rights organization. The national coordinator, which was appointed in 2007, has two main functions in the field: to coordinate common work of different actors and to present the independent report to the Government, international organizations, diplomatic agencies, non-governmental and other institutions. This model of coordination ensures independent and objective evaluation of human trafficking situation in our country.

Mr. Chairman,

Let me finish my statement with an expression of hope that fruitful discussions of Vienna Forum will stimulate our further work in the fight against human trafficking. I believe that Vienna Forum will encourage us to work with new strength and better understanding among all players: governments, civil society, international bodies and private sector.

Thank you.