

STATEMENT BY SLOVENIA

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The Vienna Forum to Fight Human Trafficking

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Trafficking in human beings features high on the priority list of topics discussed by governments both in countries of economic and social prosperity and countries in transition. The prominence (importance) of this issue is to be attributed to initiatives of international organisations, which have initiated a slow but steady shift in this field. This is reflected particularly in the emergence of adequate mechanisms for combating human trafficking as well as increased awareness of those who come across this problem.

Even though human trafficking is not a new phenomenon, it is only in the last two decades that the European Union has been more intensely confronted with it. Additional dimensions coincided with the transition of Eastern European countries and the subsequent opening of borders. Numerous activities have made this phenomenon more recognisable.

Slovenia, as the Member State holding the Presidency of the Council of the EU, fully supports the activities in this area and efforts by both the Commission and all the Member States for a uniform and coordinated fight against human trafficking. This particularly applies to the implementation of the EU action plan, setting-up of a list of organisations providing protection and support to victims and bringing into force the documents proposed by the Commission. What I have in mind here is especially the "Recommendations on victims' identification and referral to services", and the "Assessment Manual to measure national anti-trafficking policy". Coordinated work at the national level is of key importance for transparency and planning of measures. For objective assessment of these documents it would make good sense to introduce an independent mechanism,

which will be oriented towards collecting and assessing statistical data on this issue (human trafficking).

Bearing in mind on global significance of the "Vienna forum" I would like to focus just on a short overview of activities that Slovenia carried out in this field and a reflection on the coming new challenges.

The Republic of Slovenia got actively involved in the fight against human trafficking in 2001, when it formed an inter-agency working group and appointed a national coordinator to lead the group. The roles of the inter-agency working group and the national coordinator are directed towards coordinated and active functioning of all national agencies in this field.

By setting such coordination mechanism the Government of the Republic of Slovenia showed its willingness and political will to combat human trafficking. It was also a basis for drawing up action plans, which were supplemented and upgraded through the years. The current action plan for the fight against human trafficking 2008 - 2009 was approved by the Slovenian government in July 2007. Also of key importance besides the activities planned by the Government are the projects carried out by non-governmental organisations selected in public tender procedures. NGOs play an important role in preventive programmes and programmes of assistance to victims of human trafficking. What should be pointed out here is the importance of good cooperation between governmental and non-governmental sectors, both at operational level and in the planning of joint measures and activities. Thus the current action plan is designed as a continuation of a good practice of those projects that have been proved to be effective but require continuity due to the nature of the work.

The legislative area definitely belongs among the more important achievements. Thus trafficking in human beings is a newly-defined criminal offence introduced by the 2004 amendment to the Penal Code. The new article (387.a) summarizes

the provisions of the "UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children", supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. Slovenia ratified both documents in 2004. In addition, some changes have been made to the Aliens Act, which now includes measures and procedures for the status of victims of human trafficking, including a three-month reflection period and a possibility of obtaining a temporary residence permit. Thus in this segment the provisions of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings are fully implemented and the Convention is in the process of being ratified. It is very important to constantly train and update those civil servants that deal with this issue in the course of their work. Preventive activities are the most creative and best suited for the changing trends of trafficking in human beings. All information on the activities and measures of Slovenia in the fight against trafficking in human beings can be obtained on the website of the Ministry of the Interior http://www.vlada.si/delo_vlade/projekti/boj_trgovina_z_ljudmi, which also proves that this topic is more transparent and has come closer to wider public.

Despite all this, we should not get complacent. New trends and forms of human trafficking require more effective solutions and closer connections between all key players in the fight against this phenomenon of modern society. For this reason we are of the opinion in Slovenia that proposals and initiatives of experts and international organisations definitely deserve serious consideration and implementation of proposed measures both at the national and international levels.