



SWEDEN

PLENARY SESSION STATEMENT

13 February 2008

The Vienna Forum to Fight Human Trafficking

Although trafficking in human beings is not a new problem, it appears to have expanded in many parts of the world and assumed an increasingly global character. Trafficking in human beings is a complex problem that to a large extent derives from poverty and marginalization (supply side) in conjunction with the cynical and unscrupulous exploitation of people's vulnerability to satisfy other people's need or demand for various services. It is therefore also a consequence of social and gender inequality – both locally and globally, and the lack of respect for human rights. Some people are more at risk than others, in particular women, children and adolescents.

Trafficking in human beings is a crime with documented links to transnational organized crime, that generates enormous profits for traffickers. It is also a social problem that causes great suffering as well as a public health issue. Crime victims have the right to respect and recognition from society. Rights should apply equally regardless of age, sex, sexuality, race, disability, occupation religious belief or political opinion of the person concerned.

Trafficking in human beings for various purposes is often, although not always, transnational in nature. A number of international conventions and other instruments have been adopted. Important examples are the Protocol to the UN Convention on Transnational Organized Crime (the Palermo Protocol) on trafficking in human beings, especially women and children, the 2002 European Union Framework Decision on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, and the 2005 Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings.

International efforts also include the review of migration policies and the adoption of plans of action, inter alia under the auspices of the European Union and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. Important work is furthermore conducted by organizations such as UNICEF, UNIFEM, WHO, ILO and IOM, as well as by many NGOs.

Moreover, regional initiatives may contribute to coordination and operational collaboration, an example being the cooperation with a particular focus on trafficking that exists in the Baltic Sea region since 2003, and the Ouagadougou Action Plan adopted in Tripoli in 2006. The overall objectives of cooperation in Central and Eastern Europe are to promote sustainable development and deeper integration and partnership in the Baltic Sea region and its environs. Sweden has taken active part in this work and has ratified and implemented the international instruments, or is in the process of doing so.

In the effort to fight trafficking it is common to refer to “the three Ps” - prevention, prosecution and protection.

To prevent trafficking from taking place it is necessary to address the very root causes why people end up in the risk zone. This can be due to poverty or lack of opportunities to earn income from decent work. Trafficking is thus a development issue. Trafficking is also a security issue, and can be a consequence of conflict and war or emerge in the wake of other emergencies such as natural disasters. It can be lack of education or lack of equality between men and women. Very often, vulnerability to trafficking is due to a combination of factors.

The role of demand is pivotal. We must also prevent trafficking by addressing demand in our own countries. Without demand there would not be any trafficking. It is the market, the clients, that provide the business opportunities for the organized crime that is behind trafficking and which, also, is behind very much of the procuring of sexual services, and increasingly also behind trafficking for labor exploitation. This is one of the reasons behind the rather unique Swedish legislation on prostitution that criminalizes the buyer of sexual services, not the seller.

The driving force behind the Swedish law is not morality but equality and human rights. The aim of our human rights laws and ordinances is to protect those who are made vulnerable by situations beyond their own control, such as children when they risk being exploited, or women when they risk being abused.

Trafficking in human beings is today also often for labor purposes. And there is also a question of demand. Without the demand for cheap, easily manipulated labor, there would not be any market. And the market is ourselves; buying cheap labor, for example for domestic services, that might be trafficked, encouraging begging, that might be organized and exploited by someone else.

Governments have committed themselves to prosecute the perpetrators of trafficking, the organized crime bosses and traffickers. This is not easy because international crime is often well organized and those who could witness in the courts against them are very often the victims of trafficking themselves and they do not dare to do so.

Therefore, if you want to prosecute you have to protect the victims by giving them various kinds of support, for instance the right to stay in the receiving country for a period and not being forcibly returned to the sending country where many face violence and the risk of being re-trafficked.

Protection includes a lasting medical and psychological rehabilitation of the victims, a reintegration into normal life, a job, an income and a social context to belong to. When we talk about protection of victims we have to realize that victims of trafficking for prostitution, slave like labor or begging are not illegal immigrants or simple prostitutes or outlaws, or juvenile delinquents. Therefore much needs to be done in terms of awareness raising of the public, and education and training for the police, social workers, prosecutors, border guards, airport staff, embassy employees or anyone who is likely to come in contact with victims of trafficking.

Investigation and prosecution of crimes relating to trafficking may be very difficult in practice and require that the law enforcement agencies and judicial authorities have sufficient resources, working methods and legal tools. Internal coordination and cooperation among various national authorities is also required.

The transnational and often organized nature of the crimes call for enhanced and more effective international cooperation between the police, customs officers and the judicial authorities. Apart from traditional forms of cooperation, new, closer and more efficient forms of cooperation are being developed. The establishment of specialized central authorities and direct contacts between national authorities contribute to better cooperation. In Europe, operational cooperation takes place within institutions such as Eurojust and Europol. Sweden believes this development to be very important and supports the various efforts made in this field. Broadening the scope, Sweden is also very supportive of the qualitative work and technical assistance that the UNODC provides with respect to international legal cooperation.

Children have a special right to protection from trafficking and a right to support from the authorities. Children suffer both psychologically and physically. Support and treatment for these children are important to allow healing processes to take their course and to provide support and assistance in the future development of the child. Recognizing this a Working Group on Cooperation on Children at Risk (WGCC) was established in 2002 as part of the Council of the Baltic Sea cooperation. The aim of the cooperation on children is to establish multi-professional networks of experts on all levels - from high officials in the government to the social workers and police officers in the field who actually meet these children - to enhance the protection of and support provided children in the area.

During the past few years the WGCC has implemented the program Unaccompanied and Trafficked Children in the Baltic Sea Region. One part of this program is the establishment of National Contact Points on ministerial level in the area. The aim of this is to increase cooperation and enable professionals in the field who come across trafficked children to identify someone in the home country to - when it is considered being in the best interest of the child - assist the young person to return to her/his home. A training for professionals in the field took place in 2006/2007 and a mapping took place in 2007. The mapping, carried out on behalf of the WGCC by the Swedish journalist Svante Weyler, was just recently published in the report *The Frail Chain - Support for Child Victims of Trafficking in the Baltic Sea Region*.

Combating trafficking in human beings has high priority in Sweden. It is wholly unacceptable that human beings are being treated as goods that can be bought and sold for different purposes.

To fight trafficking, it is necessary to implement a range of measures at different levels and in different areas. We need measures ensuring the victim's protection and measures to fight against international organised crime. We must also strengthen the social, economic and political position of people in the countries of origin and put different measures in place to discourage the demand. Through international development cooperation measures must be implemented that increase people's educational and livelihood choices in their home countries.

To be successful, measures to combat trafficking must have a cross-border approach. Effective national, regional and international co-operation between the countries of origin, transit and destination is necessary.