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Together Against Trafficking in Human Beings

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Press Conference on the 10th EU Anti-Trafficking Day

In order to mark the 10th EU Anti-Trafficking Day, the 18 October 2016, the European Commission organised a press conference in Vienna the day before (17 October 2016). This year, the EU Anti-Trafficking Day coincides with the works of the Eighth Conference of Parties of the United Nations Conference on Transnational and Organised Crime (UNTOC) in Vienna, to which the EU is a party. The press conference brought together EU Member States and international partners in joint efforts to address trafficking in human beings.

Yury Fedotov, the Executive Director of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime highlighted that "Every day, our goal is to strive for an end to the cruelty of human trafficking. Just as importantly, we must ensure that every victim becomes a spirited and confident survivor by offering them our unconditional support and assistance. But, this cannot be achieved without a considerable effort from the international community. Success can only come through greater cooperation and collaboration, and the full implementation of the UN Convention on Transnational Organized Crime and its protocols on human trafficking and migrant smuggling."

Ambassador Didier Lenoir, Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the International Organisations in Vienna, noted that "Human trafficking is a multi-billion dollar industry, turning people into commodities and destroying their dreams for a better life. So let's stop reading statistics and start changing them!". He went on to highlight that "In order to contribute to combatting human trafficking, the EU and UNODC have launched the Global Action to Prevent and Address Trafficking in Persons and the Smuggling of Migrants (GLO.ACT). This four-year joint initiative will be implemented in partnership with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)."

Myria Vassiliadou, EU Anti-Trafficking Coordinator in the European Commission underlined the comprehensive and ambitious EU legal and policy framework to address trafficking in human beings. She highlighted that astronomical profits as well as the demand for all forms of exploitation fuel this serious form of organised crime and fundamental rights violation. The Coordinator presented the Comprehensive Policy Review of Anti-Trafficking Projects, a study completed as a deliverable of the EU Strategy towards the Eradication of Trafficking in Human Beings (2012-2016). 321 anti-trafficking projects were directly funded by the Commission at a total of EUR 158.5 million during the period 2004-2015. This dataset does include allocations in the context of the response to the migration crisis. 221 different principal grant holders received funding and ran activities in over 100 different countries worldwide. Two thirds of funded projects and funding was awarded to principal grant holders located in EU Member States and one third to principal grant holders located in non-EU countries. Just over half of funded projects were led by non-governmental organisations (52%). EC funding per project which was significantly higher than any of the other types of principal grant holder at EUR 1.1 million compared to less than EUR 500,000. Together DG International Cooperation and Development and DG Home Affairs and Migration contracted over 80% of the funded projects (43% and 38% respectively) and almost 90% (67% and 22% respectively) of EC funding. Funded projects on sexual exploitation received the lowest average funding per project (EUR 231,429). Funded projects on child trafficking were awarded EUR 30.5 million. Funded projects on Labour exploitation received the third highest level of EC funding, worth

EUR 22 million. The Coordinator further elaborated on how the projects contributed to the work against trafficking in human beings at the EU level and more precisely to the priorities of the Commission in this area.

The Coordinator added "This study is showcase to accountability from the Commission. The findings will inform all relevant stakeholders and contribute to our future policy orientation. Further, we will ensure that our funding efforts better reflect our policy priorities and strengthen issues that have received less focus in the past. Most importantly the findings will help in ensuring that our efforts lead to impact. The European Commission will continue to support financially such efforts against trafficking in human beings: efforts to protect the victims, prosecute the perpetrators and prevent the crime from happening in the first place".

Oľga ALGAYEROVÁ, Ambassador at the Permanent Mission of the Slovak Republic to the International Organisations in Vienna underlined "The Slovak Republic as the presiding country of the Council of the European Union considers combating trafficking in human beings as one of the important areas, where solutions are not possible without jointly agreed solutions that have to be sustainable. Slovakia transformed the main conceptual ideas of the EU Strategy towards the Eradication of Trafficking in Human Beings 2012-2016 in its national program and action plan to combat trafficking in human beings (2015-2018), which directs all activities of public sector in cooperation with non-governmental organizations in this area. We are very pleased that during the Slovak Presidency of the Council of the European Union we have the opportunity to express our support for the development of future policy orientation at EU level to combat human trafficking, which will be meaningful continuation of the efforts to tackle trafficking in human beings as a whole and to respond to emerging trends and needs in this area."

Michèle Ramis, Ambassador of France in charge of transnational organised crime underscored that "The 10th EU Anti-Trafficking day provides a good opportunity to take stock of the situation regarding human trafficking. We support the efforts and work of the EU Anti-Trafficking Coordinator, Dr. Vassiliadou, to implement the EU policy in this field. France is strongly committed in combating all forms of human trafficking, through the implementation of a national action plan, in discouraging the demand, protecting the victims and fighting against the traffickers. Due to the gender dimension of the THB, France is particularly involved in fighting against sexual exploitation. France has recently adopted a law to strengthen the fight against the "prostitutional system", which is a contribution to the fight against human trafficking. France also prioritizes addressing trafficking of minors, especially in order to assure their best protection".

Elisabeth Tichy-Fisslberger, Ambassador and National Coordinator on Combatting Human Trafficking of Austria noted that "International reports suggest increased vulnerability of migrants and refugees, particularly unaccompanied minors, to become victims of trafficking. However, there still is little evidence, additional efforts have to be undertaken to get a clearer picture. Austria puts a particular focus on sensitization and awareness raising of professional groups who get in contact with potential victims among migrants and refugees and will prioritize the issue of trafficking in the context of crises driven migration, not only at a public event on 21 October on the occasion of the EU Anti-Trafficking Day, but also during its OSCE Chairmanship in 2017".

Per-Anders Sunesson, Ambassador of Sweden in charge of combatting trafficking in human beings stressed that "in his capacity as Ambassador he promotes and advocates for the Nordic model regarding the prohibition of buying sex as an effective instrument to fight trafficking for sexual exploitation, to enhance gender equality and strengthen human rights".

The works of the 8th Conference of Parties will continue until 21 October.

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