



## **United States Mission to the OSCE**

### **Trafficking in Human Beings**

**Statement Delivered by Ambassador Pamela Hyde Smith  
U.S. Delegation to the OSCE Implementation Meeting  
October 10, 2003**

Madam Moderator,

The United States estimates that 800,000 to 900,000 people annually are trafficked across international borders each year. Human trafficking is rivaling arms and drug trafficking as one of the most lucrative illicit businesses in the world. Human traffickers target the most vulnerable people, usually rural or economically disadvantaged women and children, who are desperate to escape poverty.

I echo the words of President Bush at the United Nations General Assembly on September 23<sup>rd</sup>:

There is a special evil in the abuse and exploitation of the most innocent and vulnerable. The victims of the sex trade see little of life before they see the very worst of life – an underworld of brutality and lonely fear. Those who create these victims, and profit from their suffering, must be severely punished. Those who patronize this industry debase themselves and deepen the misery of others. And governments that tolerate this trade are tolerating a form of slavery.

The United States believes that the primary responsibility for combating trafficking in persons in the OSCE region rests with the OSCE participating States. We urge all OSCE States that have not done so to strengthen their capabilities at the national level by adopting and implementing legislation to criminalize trafficking in human beings, including appropriate penalties, with a view to ensuring effective law enforcement response and prosecution, and providing appropriate and quality assistance to the victims of this crime. At the same time, because of its transnational nature, trafficking in humans is a crime that requires coordination and complementary efforts in all countries, and these countries often have varying law enforcement and victim protection capabilities. It is important that neighboring countries work closely with one another, as well as with source or destination countries, in order to combat trafficking, improve prosecution of traffickers, and better protect trafficking victims.

Government officials have much to learn from NGOs; developing close working relationships with community leaders is imperative. NGOs are often well placed to provide the kind of long-term personal assistance that victims need to recover physically and emotionally. Some governments have increased their efforts to combat trafficking in human beings by providing in-kind assistance to NGOs or international organizations. Direct care by NGOs, as well as psychological, legal, and physical protection of the victims, is particularly helpful since many victims are distrustful of police and other government officials – especially if they are in the country illegally. NGOs are particularly effective in reinforcing the notion that these people are not to be treated as criminals, but as victims.

We welcome the OSCE Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings, which is an excellent compendium of best practices for participating States as well as the organization as a whole. Similarly, the language on combating trafficking included in the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Rotterdam Declaration in July is a noteworthy example of the commitment that OSCE parliamentarians have made to fighting this form of modern day slavery. The task ahead is to turn these recommendations into concrete actions that show clear results. The United States strongly believes that the creation of a new Anti-Trafficking Mechanism would make the OSCE more effective at combating trafficking. Such a mechanism could raise the political profile of the issue, establish a framework for the OSCE to work across the whole OSCE region, coordinate OSCE across all three dimensions, and serve as a public face in working with other International Organizations to combat trafficking.

The United States has underscored its support for these anti-trafficking initiatives by taking several significant steps ourselves to make our own anti-trafficking policies more robust. President Bush has determined that the fight against human trafficking is a “transnational threat” and has called for a zero-tolerance policy for U.S. Government employees and contractors abroad regarding human trafficking. In addition, under the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000, or TVPA, countries can face sanctions on the basis of their governments’ efforts to fight trafficking in persons.

We are convinced that this kind of effort can be a catalyst for progress in the fight against human trafficking. Since the advent of the State Department’s Trafficking in Persons Report, called for under the TVPA, more OSCE States have passed laws, trained police, built shelters for victims, established hot lines, or taken other steps to halt the progress of the traffickers. This year those countries not showing significant efforts in this fight faced possible sanctions, principally termination of non-humanitarian, non-trade-related assistance. At the time of the report’s publication in June, the State Department concluded that six OSCE participating States – Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Greece, Kazakhstan, Turkey and Uzbekistan – were not making significant efforts to bring themselves into compliance with the TVPA’s minimum standards to combat trafficking. In September, the President announced that, since June, all six countries had dramatically increased their anti-trafficking efforts. While these countries thus successfully avoided sanctions, vigilance is required to ensure implementation of their new laws and vigorous prosecution of traffickers. In addition to those six countries, the State Department found that 19 other OSCE States do not yet comply with the TVPA’s minimum standards, though they are making significant efforts to do so. The United States is prepared to help countries that demonstrate a determined commitment to strengthen their domestic capacities for combating trafficking.

In addition to individual nations, it is important that international organizations, including the UN and NATO, take this issue seriously and begin to institutionalize comprehensive programs aimed at combating trafficking in persons. Steps should also be taken to ensure that international military and police force personnel do not contribute to or participate in trafficking of persons.

The countries of the Balkans have come a long way over the past few years, and, despite significant resource constraints, have demonstrated great progress in increasing their effectiveness in combating trafficking in persons. Challenges remain, however, and we continue to work closely with authorities in the region through bilateral and multilateral fora to strengthen weak rule-of-law structures, fight organized crime and corruption, and ensure adequate victim protection mechanisms are in place.

Traffickers and their networks threaten even the most stable environments in richer countries, where they have established their organized criminal activities. Richer countries must continue their efforts to both stop the demand for exploitation as well as provide longer-term assistance and protection to victims who cannot return to their homelands, where they face physical danger as well as enormous psychological shame at home and in their communities. Specifically, longer-term residency and permission to work must be made available to victims to rebuild their lives, achieve economic independence and overall achieve the self-confidence they need to prevent becoming victims once again.

Madame Moderator, the United States is fully aware of the complexity and difficulty of the fight against human trafficking. While our efforts must be largely directed at our own shores, no individual country has the power to eradicate trafficking alone. We must work together, and with assistance from OSCE institutions, to fight the trade in human beings. We call on all participating States to use their governmental powers, resources and ingenuity to end this slavery.