

Vice-President Cardin and Special Representative Smith introduce legislation to combat child trafficking



OSCE PA Vice-President and Head of the U.S. Delegation to the PA, Ben Cardin



OSCE PA Special Representative on Human Trafficking Issues, Chris Smith

Beginning with the 1996 Annual Session in Stockholm, the OSCE PA has passed numerous resolutions addressing human trafficking. Most recently, at the 2009 Annual Session in Vilnius, the PA called on participating States “to redouble efforts to combat trafficking in human beings.”

PA Vice-President Ben Cardin, who also serves as Head of the PA’s U.S. Delegation, and the PA’s Special Representative on Human Trafficking Issues, Chris Smith, have introduced legislation in the U.S. Congress intended to facilitate the international fight against the trafficking of children.

The bill introduced in the Senate on 1 April by Senator Cardin specifically aims to bring additional financial resources to fighting child trafficking by authorizing the U.S. Secretary of State to enter into three-year “Child Protection Compacts” with countries that are eager but financially unable to effectively combat trafficking within their borders.

The Child Protection Compact Act, Mr. Cardin explains in a recent column in *The Hill* newspaper, seeks to assist “developing nations [that] often lack the resources and mechanisms to confront traffickers.”

“This bill,” Mr. Cardin writes, “will help co-ordinate an international response against trafficking in persons by empowering the State Department to partner with foreign governments, so a lack of resources in one country does not mean a lack of action to protect children from these crimes. Under this legislation, if a government demonstrates a commitment to eliminate trafficking, they will qualify for a three-year agreement with the Secretary of State.”

Mr. Cardin notes that “modern day human traffickers have developed creative and ruthless methods to extend the practice of slavery into the 21st century,” and that “this legislation is critical to protecting children, the most vulnerable prey of human traffickers.”

Congressman Chris Smith, who has served as the Assembly’s Special Representative on Human Trafficking Issues since 2004, introduced similar legislation in the House of Representatives in 2009. During a recent visit to Washington, Secretary General Spencer Oliver met with Mr. Smith to discuss the issue of trafficking as well as other OSCE PA concerns.

Deadline approaching for Trans-Asian Parliamentary Forum

More than 70 parliamentarians are registered for the Second Trans-Asian Parliamentary Forum to be held in Almaty, on 14-16 May 2010, hosted by the Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan in co-operation with the OSCE PA. The Forum will include MPs from OSCE participating States, Mediterranean and Asian partner countries, as well as parliamentarians from Pakistan, who will participate as guests. Representatives from China have also been invited.

The theme of the Forum is “The OSCE Eurasian Dimension” and will include pressing issues on regional security (including Afghanistan, terrorism and disarmament), economic concerns (trade, resource management, environmental issues), and the human dimension (religious tolerance, political development, freedom of the media, drug trafficking, trafficking in human beings and gender equality).

Follow-Up Deadline Reminder

The International Secretariat is currently compiling research on follow-up action on recommendations made by the OSCE PA at the 18th Annual Session in Vilnius. This research is intended to support the work of the Vice-Chairs of the three General Committees in preparing their reports to be presented at the 19th Annual Session in Oslo.

Delegations are kindly asked to submit completed follow-up questionnaires to Presidential Advisor Andreas Baker (andreas.baker@oscepa.dk) by **9 April** or to contact him with any questions.

In preparing these follow-up reports, the Secretariat relies on timely responses to the questionnaire and greatly appreciates the co-operation of all delegations in meeting the deadline.