



**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe**

**Ambassador Madina Jarbussynova,  
OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator  
for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings**

**Remarks**

*Meeting of the General Committee on  
Democracy, Human Rights and Humanitarian Questions (Third Committee)  
of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly  
Winter Meeting*

*Vienna*

*25 February 2016*

## INTRODUCTION

Madam Chairperson,

Distinguished members of the Parliamentary Assembly,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to thank the Chairperson, Ms. Isabel Santos, for her kind invitation to address the Parliamentary Assembly Third Committee in my capacity as OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings. I welcome the Committee's special focus on the migration and refugee crisis affecting the OSCE region and its readiness to discuss the consequences of the crisis for trafficking in human beings.

The situation along migration routes to Europe and within Europe is of great concern. Given the exponential rise of people on the move in the past few years, it is of the utmost importance to address this issue through a comprehensive and human-rights based approach. These “**mixed-migration flows**” are comprised of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants who are often highly vulnerable and increasingly at risk of being trafficked and exploited. The size of these migration flows in the Mediterranean region is increasing every day. According to FRONTEX, over a million illegal border crossings were detected in 2015. This is 6 times the number detected in 2014.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

European countries are encountering difficulties in distinguishing between refugees on the one hand and economic migrants on the other. As a result, authorities along the western Balkan route are progressively closing their borders to migrants not fleeing war-torn countries, or introducing border controls in an attempt to limit the flow of migrants.

While recognizing that effective border controls are an essential part of **combating transnational threats**, we should be realistic about expectations. Shutting down borders and leaving thousands of migrants stranded at border crossings with no access to alternative options will only increase the migrants' reliance on smugglers or traffickers.

The complexity of these migrations flows also makes it **difficult to draw a line between smuggling, trafficking and movements of people** fleeing war and persecution or seeking better lives. The reality is that states' robust measures against irregular migration flows have unintended consequences which may increase the vulnerability of refugees and migrants to trafficking. In fact, routes have become longer, more difficult, expensive and risky and as a result, migration has become progressively more fragmented, with numerous stop-overs. In such scenarios, the shift from a situation of migration to a situation of trafficking can easily occur, with migrants, for example, likely to be subjected to sexual or labour exploitation.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In recent years, the OSCE has increased its efforts to address the threats stemming from irregular migration in co-operation with its participating States and various international organizations.

In 2015, my Office thoroughly addressed the relationship between human trafficking and migration at the **15<sup>th</sup> OSCE Alliance against Trafficking in Persons conference** which offered the opportunity to explore possible responses to human trafficking in crisis situations. A key conclusion of the *Alliance* conference was the understanding that protecting the human rights of vulnerable migrants, including victims of trafficking, and enhancing the security of states are not mutually exclusive. On the contrary, an integrated approach which safeguards both state and human security in the context of migration is

crucial. Moreover, preventive actions should be addressed at the onset of a humanitarian response.

This is why my Office is **actively engaged in Ukraine** to bring visibility to the human trafficking threat and increase the capacity of relevant local stakeholders. My Office, together with the OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Ukraine and the Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine, conducted several **training exercises for the SMM staff** on how to monitor and report THB related trends in the context of a crisis situation, as well as on how to ensure that the Mission's activities do not contribute to any form of human trafficking. Moreover, I visited the Eastern regions of Ukraine and met with local authorities and IDPs to mobilize global efforts against trafficking in human beings.

In addition, I personally contributed to numerous **high-level debates** in the context of the current migration and refugee crisis.

This year, my Office will continue addressing THB in the context of the current crisis, including in co-operation with the OSCE Field Operations. For instance, my Office is planning to contribute to a **regional initiative on trafficking in human beings and migration** initiated by the **Field Operations in the Balkans**.

Furthermore, my Office has started implementing an **ambitious project on Combating Human Trafficking along Migration Routes**. This is a simulation-based learning exercise which aims to enhance the capacities of various stakeholders to comprehensively respond to trafficking in human beings along migration routes and to improve victim identification and assistance. We are planning to train over 200 stakeholders from the OSCE and neighbouring regions, including law enforcement officials, prosecutors, financial investigators and civil society at the **Centre of Excellence for Stability Police Units (CoESPU)** in Vicenza, Italy.

Finally, I will continue to raise awareness through strategic visits to **migrant and refugee “hotspots”**. I plan to visit the recently established **EU hotspot and first reception facility in Lampedusa**, where I would like to witness first-hand the progress made by EU authorities in promptly identifying potential victims of human trafficking and responding to their basic needs. On this point, I personally stand ready to engage in high-level joint visits to migrant and refugee “hotspots”.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Despite the undeniable **“security challenges” posed by these mixed migration flows**, it is the vulnerable human being on the move who needs and deserves protection, and who should be at the centre of our discourse on migration and trafficking. And it is precisely my duty to prioritize the protection of human rights and dignity of all potential victims of human trafficking, including among refugees and migrants.

In this regard, I would like to commend the strong commitment of the OSCE parliamentarians to address the current migration and refugee crisis, in particular by recalling the **2015 PA Resolution** in which the Assembly urged national governments and other stakeholders to promote and protect the rights of people, especially children on the move who are particularly vulnerable to exploitation. I am sure you were all shocked by Europol’s recent report on the possible disappearance of more than 10000 migrant children. There is a possibility they could have fallen or run the risk of falling into the hands of traffickers.

Finally, I would also like to praise the Parliamentary Assembly for raising human trafficking concerns and promoting dialogue within the OSCE, in particular the Assembly’s recent **Resolution on Responsibility to Combat Human Trafficking in Government Contracts for Goods and Services**. I

recently met **Congressman Christopher Smith** during my country visit to the United States where we had fruitful discussions on issues relating to human trafficking and I want to thank the PA Special Representative on human trafficking issues for his strong support and co-operation with my Office.

The migration and refugee crisis clearly illustrates the need to create more opportunities for safe and legal migration channels to European countries. States should set up **effective national mechanisms to promptly identify and assist potential victims of trafficking**. Similarly, more efforts need to be put into the **identification and prosecution of human traffickers**. The fragmentation of trafficking operations into a wide range of intermediaries makes transnational criminal networks harder to detect and disrupt. As we have seen in other criminal organizations, trafficking networks adjust their structure and mechanisms to ever-changing political, social and economic conditions.

**To conclude**, I want to emphasize that we must join forces to tackle the vulnerability of those on the move and ensure their adequate protection.

Thank you for your attention!