



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

Office of the Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings

17th *Alliance against Trafficking in Persons* conference

Trafficking in Children and the Best Interests of the Child

3– 4 April 2017

Hofburg (Neuer Saal), Vienna

CONCEPT NOTE

FOCUS

The focus of this year's high-level conference is to enhance the coherence of international efforts and further promote integrated approaches to **respond to child trafficking in the OSCE region** exclusively in the best interests of the child.

Aiming to strengthen measures to **prevent** child trafficking, **protect** children's rights and efficiently **prosecute** perpetrators, topics raised at the conference will include threats facing children in crisis situations, factors heightening child vulnerability, the adequacy of existing child protection systems, as well as policies and measures which may foster the best interests of the child. Given the current security context, a special emphasis will also be placed on children on the move, including unaccompanied minors and internally displaced children.

THE ALLIANCE

The *Alliance against Trafficking in Persons* is an informal **platform for advocacy and co-operation** that includes international and civil society organizations. The *Alliance* was launched in 2004 to combine and co-ordinate the efforts of all Alliance partners behind the common goal of preventing and combating human trafficking. Acting as a framework to improve synergy, the *Alliance* also supports the OSCE participating States in establishing a harmonized approach to combat this heinous crime which violates human rights and undermines the rule of law, human security and good migration governance throughout the region.

The 17th *Alliance* conference will be attended by **representatives of the 57 OSCE participating States and 11 Partners for Co-operation**, major **international organizations** and **NGOs** which are partners in the *Alliance against Trafficking in Persons*, as well as academia, civil society, the media, trade unions, and think-tanks. Active participation during the discussion sessions and via Twitter - @osce_cthb, #cthb17 - is highly encouraged.

More information can be found at: <http://www.osce.org/event/alliance17>

BACKGROUND

According to the 2016 UNODC Global Report on Trafficking in Persons, approximately **one in four detected trafficking victims is a child**. Given this alarming figure, and in preparation of the high-level meeting to review progress achieved in the implementation of the **Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons** (October 2017), the international community is committed to taking stock of progress made in the fight against child trafficking and redoubling efforts to address this scourge.

In adopting two Addendums to the **OSCE Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings**, one of which specifically focussed on *Addressing the Special needs of Child Victims of Trafficking for Protection and Assistance*¹, OSCE participating States expressed their serious concern over the steady increase in child trafficking, both transnationally and internally. Likewise, target 8.7 of the recently adopted **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** calls upon nations to “take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms”. In the meanwhile, harmful attitudes and practices (e.g. early marriage), lack of birth registration, limited access to education and/or healthcare, and crises around the globe continue to jeopardise children’s welfare. As highlighted by UNICEF, “trafficking occurs when a child’s protective environment collapses as a result of conflict, economic hardship, or discrimination”.

As reaffirmed by the OSCE participating States in MC Decision 13/04, the general principles of the best interests of the child, non-discrimination, survival, participation and development, provide the framework for all actions concerning children. Child victims of trafficking must be protected as any other children, and regardless of a child’s age, gender, status or origin. While participating States are conscious of the need for security and protection for the fulfilment and enjoyment of children’s rights², vigorous measures should be taken against all forms of exploitation including forced labour, sexual exploitation, organ removal, begging, or criminal activities such as the use of children as drug couriers. Finally, more effective ways should be conceived to implement obligations stemming from relevant United Nations and Council of Europe instruments to address, *inter alia*, issues such as vulnerability factors, access to justice and the determination of the best interests of the child, in countries of origin, transit and destination.

Against this backdrop, it is critical to regularly review existing child protection systems and promote far-reaching actions across the OSCE region. The 17th *Alliance* conference will address **human trafficking threats for children in crisis** and the **effectiveness of child protection systems to prevent and combat this crime**. The conference will provide a forum in which participants will analyse case studies, exchange good practices and develop integrated recommendations to adequately respond to child trafficking in a rights-based and child-friendly manner.

¹ 2005 Addendum to the OSCE Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings: *Addressing the special needs of child victims of trafficking for protection and assistance*, (PC.DEC/685) and 2013 Addendum to the OSCE Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings: *One Decade Later* (PC.DEC/1107/Corr.1)

² Ibid