



## **EUROPEAN UNION**

### **OSCE Permanent Council No. 1277 Vienna, 30 July 2020**

#### **EU Statement on the World Day against Trafficking in Persons**

Today, 30 July, we mark the World Day against Trafficking in Persons. This is an opportunity to raise awareness of the situation of victims of Human Trafficking and to reiterate our commitment to work together to combat this global and complex crime.

Last week, in this room and online, the 20th High-level Alliance against Trafficking in Persons Conference allowed for a rich exchanges of views and sharing of experience amongst participating States, prosecutors, judges, law enforcement officials, front line responders, civil society and other relevant actors. The discussions stressed the importance of adopting a victim-centered approach to investigation and prosecution, of improving victims' access to justice, and of working together for the promotion and protection of victims' rights.

Today is also the final day of UNODC's month long "Blue Heart Campaign". This global awareness-raising initiative seeks to encourage involvement of governments, civil society, the corporate sector and individuals, to inspire action and help prevent this heinous crime. Several EU Member States support this campaign and contribute to the UN Voluntary Trust Fund for Victims of Trafficking in Persons, which provides vital assistance and protection to the victims of trafficking through specialized, dedicated organisations across the globe.

The European Union promotes a comprehensive approach when addressing trafficking in human beings, which is human rights-based, victim-centred, gender-sensitive and age-specific. The EU continues to insist on the importance of addressing the gender dimension of human trafficking. This June, the EU

Commission adopted a Victims rights Strategy (2020-2025). Its main objective is to ensure that all victims of all crime, no matter where in the EU or under what circumstance, can fully rely on their rights being respected.

The EU supports the recently adopted Human Rights Council resolution on “Trafficking in persons, especially women and children: strengthening human rights through enhanced protection, support and empowerment of victims of trafficking, especially women and children”.

The Covid-19 pandemic has, and will continue to have, consequences in the field of trafficking in human beings: vulnerabilities are being compounded, new trafficking trends emerge, and shelter may be harder to access. In this respect, we welcome the “Recommendations on short-term responses to COVID-19” issued by the OSCE Special Representative and Coordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings. We also look forward to the publication of the ODIHR and UN Women Policy Survey Reports and Recommendations “Addressing Emerging Human Trafficking Trends and Consequences of the COVID-19 Pandemic”.

In November this year, we will celebrate the 20th anniversary of the adoption of the Palermo Protocol. In this year of important anniversaries for the OSCE, we note that, it is also 20 years ago that the participating States adopted the first OSCE Ministerial Council Decision on Enhancing the OSCE’s efforts to combat trafficking in human beings (MC(8)/1). Twenty years later, the EU and its Member States remain committed to working closely with international partners to promote adherence to international legal standards on combating trafficking in persons and implementation of OSCE commitments.

The Candidate Countries REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA\*, MONTENEGRO\*, SERBIA\* and ALBANIA\*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA countries ICELAND and LIECHTENSTEIN, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, GEORGIA, ANDORRA, SAN MARINO and CANADA align themselves with this statement.

\* Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.