



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to the Report by the OSCE Special Representative and Coordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings

As delivered by Ambassador Michael R. Carpenter
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
November 9, 2023

Special Representative Johnstone, dear Kari, welcome to the Permanent Council. You and I have known each other for many years, and I cannot think of a more qualified, experienced, or talented individual to head the Office of the Special Representative and Coordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings at the OSCE. Congratulations on the beginning of what I know will be an incredibly successful tenure.

We welcome your thorough and substantive report. Your office has clearly done extraordinary work this year. As you discussed, your office assisted participating States in implementing their OSCE commitments to prevent trafficking, identify and assist victims and survivors, and prosecute traffickers. We commend your office for its coordination of OSCE activities across the three dimensions as well as your office's efforts with external partners, and we appreciate your work to raise the public and political profile of the OSCE anti-trafficking agenda internationally.

Your office's achievements are all the more remarkable against the backdrop of Russia's ongoing war against Ukraine, which created enormous refugee and humanitarian crises that, in turn, have raised significantly the risk of trafficking in human beings throughout the region. We applaud the OSCE's successful partnership with Thomson Reuters on the Be Safe Campaign, which raises awareness on the human trafficking risks for refugees from Ukraine.

I also want to congratulate your office's organization of this year's Alliance Against Trafficking in Persons Conference held in April, which focused on national anti-trafficking leadership and building an effective national response; systems and structures; and political will to successfully combat trafficking in human beings. We appreciated former Special Representative Val Richey's "Decalogue" of recommendations for participating States to ensure effective anti-trafficking strategies, including through having a National Anti-Trafficking Coordinator, an anti-trafficking commission or task force, and a National Action Plan. We agree it is of utmost importance that participating States adopt these measures, increase resources and efforts to prevent and combat the growing problem of trafficking in human beings, and update old and ineffective policies by prioritizing the issue. Your office plays a positive role in helping States realize these improvements.

The recommendations I just cited, consisting of 10 crucial best practices, also included critical topics like the intersection of technology and trafficking and the prevention of labor exploitation in supply chains. The United States is proud to contribute to your office's

extrabudgetary projects in these areas. In fact, the United States has provided roughly \$3 million in support for OSCE-led anti-trafficking efforts since 2021, including \$1 million to the landmark project on preventing and responding to trafficking in human beings amid the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine. We support efforts to bring in survivor voices and to take a trauma-informed approach to victim identification and assistance. We hope you will look for additional ways to work with survivors to make them a central pillar of OSCE counter-trafficking efforts. And we strongly support and consider indispensable your simulation-based training exercises focused on regional challenges.

We very much appreciated your team's important contributions to the Warsaw Human Dimension Conference in October. The side events – highlighting the nexus between persons with disabilities and human trafficking and keeping up with technological advances – were sobering reminders of the critical work ahead if we are to better provide victim-centered, trauma-informed approaches to all those in need, and stop those intent on using AI and simulated exploitation material to prey on the most vulnerable.

Your office has been a model for cooperation across the Organization as well, as evidenced by the joint publication you are working on with ODIHR on the complex dynamics involved with the trafficking of persons belonging to minorities, including national minorities. Your collaboration with ODIHR on combating trafficking in persons is essential, and we know it will continue to flourish under your leadership.

Special Representative Johnstone, let me reiterate the United States' full support for the work you and your team are carrying out. We are grateful for your efforts and your vision and wish you all the best in your future work.

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