

DELEGATION OF TURKEY

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**HUMAN DIMENSION IMPLEMENTATION MEETING
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Working Session 12: Humanitarian issues and other commitments II

**ONGOING EFFORTS OF TURKEY
IN FIGHTING AGAINST TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS**

Madame Chair, Distinguished Delegates,

Trafficking in human beings is slavery, degrading human dignity.

The international community has been playing an increasingly active role in the combat of this global problem. The United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, and its Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on the 15th of November 2000, were approved by the Turkish Parliament on the 18th of March 2003.

Since 2002, Turkey has been taking active steps and displaying an active approach in the struggle against human trafficking. 239 victims of trafficking in human beings in 2004, 256 in 2005, 246 in 2006 and as of 17 September 2007, 124 victims have been identified so far. In 2004 and 2005 a total of 495, 422 in 2006 and in 2007 (up to 17 September) 279 traffickers have been apprehended.

Turkey has established a referral mechanism involving our law enforcement bodies, NGO's as well as IOM. Tip-off/emergency helpline 157 is also instrumental in the functioning of the referral system.

Our successful cooperation with the OSCE and the ODIHR was instrumental in establishing the referral system. Let me highlight the progress achieved in legislation:

- The new Turkish Penal Code was put in force as of June 1st, 2005. It prescribes heavy penalties for trafficking in human beings. The new Penal Code defines human trafficking as a crime (Article 80) and stipulates imprisonment of 8 to 12 years and legal fine corresponding ten thousand days. It also prescribes security measures for the legal entities which are involved in human trafficking.
- With the "Law on Working Permits for Foreigners", the Ministry of Labor and Social Security is authorized to issue all forms of working permits. Employment in domestic services is also made possible with this Law. It aims at providing legal protection for foreigners against exploitation in labor markets and extending legal and administrative safeguards to private services.

- In order to prevent acquisition of citizenship through false marriages, an amendment to the “Citizenship Law” has been made. In accordance with this amendment, a probation period of 3 years is required for acquiring Turkish citizenship through marriage. Those who have a job incompatible with the marriage and do not share the same house with the spouse will not be able to acquire Turkish citizenship.
- The Road Transport Regulation which has become effective as of February 25th, 2004, states that the transportation permit will be cancelled for 3 years if the person is sentenced according to certain crimes including human trafficking.

In addition to legal arrangements, we have also made considerable progress in the administrative field.

- Ministry of Foreign Affairs is responsible for national coordination of issues related to human trafficking in Turkey. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs chairs the Task Force.
- The National Task Force on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings has regularly convened since 2002. Currently, 15 governmental/non-governmental institutions and NGOs are included within the framework of this body.
- The National Task Force has prepared an “Action Plan on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings” in 2003. The Action Plan has been successfully implemented. A new Action Plan has been prepared as an output of the Project on Strengthening the Institutional Capacities for Combating Human Trafficking within the scope of Turkey-EU Financial Cooperation 2003, which was completed in July 2007. The New Action Plan will soon be approved.
- Prevention and monitoring missions are conducted by the law enforcement units throughout the country especially in summer season.
- A new EU project on “Supporting Turkey’s efforts to combat human trafficking and promote access to justice for all trafficked persons” will soon be launched. The objective of the project is to provide support to Turkish institutions in their fight against human trafficking and protection of victims in line with the EU *acquis*.
- 2006 Turkey Report on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings has been prepared by a working group under the chairmanship of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Report has been approved by the National Task Force. It is being translated into English and published. I have some preliminary copies with me for those who would be interested.

While we do our utmost to fight against trafficking in persons, we also pay due attention to pursue a humane approach. Taking into account the crucial human rights dimension of the problem, Turkey assumed a victim-oriented approach in tackling this problem. Let me also briefly outline some of the measures taken aiming directly at supporting victims themselves.

- The Ministry of Health has introduced legislative and administrative arrangements in order to provide medical treatment to the victims of human trafficking, free of charge at the state owned hospitals.
- Turkey is one of the few countries in Europe that offers “humanitarian visa” to the victims. The Ministry of Interior has authorized governorships to issue humanitarian visas and temporary residence permit to victims where necessary in order to allow them to stay in Turkey for rehabilitation and treatment. The duration of the permit is up to 6 months and it can be extended for further period. Issuance of humanitarian

visas is not conditional on the victim's cooperation with law enforcement agencies against the traffickers.

- Ankara Bar Association provides free legal counseling to the victims of human trafficking.
- In accordance with the “Action Plan on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings”, under the guidance of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a shelter in Istanbul is established for the victims in June 2004. This shelter has been managed by an NGO, namely, Human Resources Development Foundation (HRDF). More than 300 victims have been hosted and assisted in this shelter so far.
- A second shelter in Ankara has become operational as of November 2005. Shelter in Ankara has also been managed by another NGO: Foundation for Women's Solidarity. To date, 119 victims have been accommodated and assisted in Ankara.
- Psychiatric counseling to the victims of trafficking is also provided in the shelters.
- Since the beginning of 2004, safe and voluntary returns of 575 victims identified in Turkey have been ensured in collaboration with IOM.
- Voluntary return procedures for the victims of human trafficking are arranged so as to provide as much security as possible in coordination with police units, IOM, contact institutions in the countries of origin and local NGO's.

The following measures in the fight against human trafficking have been introduced in 2005 which have proven to be useful:

- A toll free, nationwide, tip off number\emergency helpline ‘157’ for the victims of trafficking has been allocated. The hotline which became operational on 23 May 2005, is run by Russian, Romanian, English and Turkish speaking operators. This number can be reached 24 hours a day, 7 days of week – including with mobile phones within Turkey. The helpline became operational for international calls (+90312 157 11 22) in April 2007. 132 victims have so far been rescued through this helpline.
- In order to inform the foreigners visiting Turkey regarding human trafficking issue, pamphlets including necessary info and helpline number “157” have been designed within the framework of the project, supported by the US Government aiming to assist victims of trafficking. These inserts are being distributed at the border gates, primarily Istanbul, Ataturk and Antalya Airports.
- During visa applications at the Turkish Embassies and Consulates in the origin countries, potential victims are informed of the human trafficking issue and the helpline 157.
- More than 500,000 pamphlets (in Turkish, Russian, Romanian and English) have been handed over at air and sea ports by the Turkish National Police.
- Additionally, a total of 150.000 leaflets were printed and distributed in Turkish, English and Russian by the General Command of Gendarmerie. Gendarmerie also prepared 9000 counter trafficking brochures in 2003 for their officials and civilians.
- In cooperation with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), spot programs in Turkish TV channels as well as on channels in Moldova, Ukraine, Romania and Belarus were aired.
- A public awareness campaign entitled “Have You Seen my Mother” was launched in February 2006. Within this context, a propaganda film was shown on TV channels

and at cinemas nationwide. 2500 campaign posters were advertised on billboards and public buses.

We believe that national counter-trafficking endeavors can only succeed by the collective will and efficient collaboration of countries of origin, transit and destination. With this in mind, we have signed bilateral cooperation protocols with Belarus, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova and Ukraine. And we participate in the related activities of various international organizations and initiatives, such as the OSCE, the Council of Europe and NATO. Turkey joined the IOM as a full member in 2004. Since the beginning of 2006, Turkey has assumed the Chairmanship of the Budapest Process, a major platform where the migration-related challenges have been dealt with. Turkey is also assuming the Chairmanship-in-Office of the BSEC until the end of October.

On the forced labour, let me express my opinion:

- Given the fact that the irregular migrant is deprived of his freedom through the fear of being sent to his origin country, allowing regular migration by the destination countries could alleviate the problem of labour exploitation;
- We should clearly define the line where the cheap labour ends and the labour exploitation starts. If we can not make this clarification, we may render our future work ineffective.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to state that we are now better equipped and more efficient in preventing, detecting and prosecuting the human trafficking related crimes, as well as protecting and assisting those who have been victims of such crimes. Our joint drive must go on. This is very much a work in progress. And the Turkish Government is fully dedicated to making this effort a true success so that people, women and children in particular, no longer suffer from the evil.

Thank you.