

Joint Statement by the Anti-Trafficking Coordinators of South-East Europe

On the occasion of the 15th EU Anti-Trafficking Day on 18 October 2021, WE, the Anti-Trafficking Coordinators of South-East Europe (SEE), members of the Network of Anti-Trafficking Coordinators of SEE, within the framework of the Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the EU 2021:

RECALLING the commitments made by the Anti-Trafficking Coordinators of SEE, as stated in the Joint Declarations on enhancing Transnational Referral Mechanisms (TRM) and Strengthening Cooperation in Cases of Human Trafficking (2012) and on strengthening regional cooperation in SEE to combat trafficking in human beings (2018);

WELCOMING the adoption of the EU Strategy on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings 2021-2025, as well as the review of the EU Anti-Trafficking Directive;

TAKING INTO ACCOUNT the Recommendations adopted by the Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA) responsible for monitoring the implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings;

RECOGNISING that persistent challenges continue to affect our region and Europe as a whole, 20 years after the adoption of the Palermo Protocol;

BUILDING on the conclusions of the 20th Conference of the OSCE Alliance against Trafficking in Persons entitled "Ending Impunity. Delivering Justice through Prosecuting Trafficking in Human Beings";

ACKNOWLEDGING the worldwide large discrepancy between the high number of estimated victims and the consistently low number of identified victims on the one hand, and the very low rate of prosecutions and convictions on the other;

1. REITERATE the strategic priorities for 2020-2024 set forth in the Strategy Paper of the Network of Anti-Trafficking Coordinators of SEE, adopted on 4 March 2020, particularly that of countering the culture of impunity by striving to make investigations and prosecutions more effective through capacity building, information exchange, law enforcement, and judicial cooperation;
2. DECLARE that the current state of impunity for the crime of trafficking in human beings is unacceptable;
3. ENCOURAGE the development of a robust criminal justice response to conduct effective investigations, increase prosecution rates, achieve a higher number of convictions and apply appropriate sentences;
4. INVITE the European Union and its Member States to enhance information sharing in the field of criminal intelligence and to facilitate cross-border and international operational and judicial cooperation with non-EU countries in the SEE region, as provided for in the EU Strategy on Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings 2021-2025,
5. UNDERTAKE TO, in a spirit of common resolve:
 - Publicise and disseminate the informative action messages developed under the initiative of the Government of Slovenia by the Secretariat of the Network of Anti-Trafficking Coordinators of SEE to address the issue of impunity in the context of the crime of trafficking in human beings;

Chair _____



REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA
MINISTRY OF THE INTERIOR

Secretariat _____



ICMPD
International Centre for
Migration Policy Development

- Step up our efforts to ensure a continued and robust political mobilization to address impunity for the crime of trafficking in human beings and the allocation of adequate resources to enable an efficiently functioning criminal justice response;
 - Continue to invest resources towards enhanced regional cooperation in the fight against trafficking in human beings, within the SEE region but also with the European Union and its Member States;
 - Promote a culture of continuous professional development in order to reach the highest professional standards among law enforcement actors and the judiciary;
6. THANK the Republic of Slovenia for integrating the topic of combating trafficking in human beings into its EU presidency programme, and the International Centre for Migration Policy Development for its support as the Secretariat of the Network of Anti-Trafficking Coordinators of SEE.