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SUMMARY REPORT

Meeting of National Anti-Trafficking Co-ordinators and Rapporteurs or equivalent mechanisms

Co-organised by the OSCE and the Council of Europe

12-13 September 2024

Vienna, Austria, and online

The meeting was co-organised for the seventh consecutive year by the Council of Europe (CoE) and the OSCE's Office of the Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings (OSR/CTHB), in line with the co-operation modalities outlined in PC.DEC/637 (2004) and PC.DEC/670 (2005). More than 170 participants from 61 countries – Council of Europe member States and OSCE participating States and Partners for Co-operation – joined the meeting in Vienna and online.

The meeting focused on vulnerabilities to human trafficking and measures to prevent them, detect and support vulnerable victims, and punish the offenders; ways to scale up the impact of the anti-trafficking actions at the national and regional/international levels, including by analysing the effectiveness and efficiency of the anti-trafficking measures implemented to date; steps to meaningfully, ethically integrate survivors' expertise in anti-trafficking policies and practices; as well as strengthening access to justice and effective remedies for victims.

Welcome and opening addresses

In her opening remarks, the OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, Dr. Kari Johnstone, underscored that trafficking in human beings remains an acute issue amplified by conflicts and crises, which push more people on the move and create multiple vulnerabilities, thus playing into traffickers' hands and increasing both demand and supply. These challenges require anti-trafficking leaders, including National Anti-Trafficking Co-ordinators and Rapporteurs, to mobilize a broad array of anti-trafficking stakeholders in countries and across the region to provide a holistic yet targeted response. She further stressed the interconnection of the topics to be discussed during the two days, putting particular emphasis on the need to scrutinize anti-trafficking efforts conducted so far vis-à-vis the impact they have delivered to be able to properly plan for the future and to engage and integrate the expertise of survivors of trafficking for policy and practice impact.

The Executive Secretary of the Council of Europe Convention on Action Against Trafficking in Human Beings, Dr. Petya Nestorova, emphasised the added value of the joint meetings conducted by CoE and OSCE since 2018. She further noted that in March 2024, the Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA) had held an event on the occasion of its 50th plenary meeting and 15 years of monitoring of the implementation of the Convention. The stocktaking of the third evaluation round of the Convention carried out by GRETA showed that while there was evidence of steps taken by State parties to meet the requirements of Convention, multiple crises, including the unprecedented surge in asylum applications, the COVID-19 pandemic, and Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine had

created new challenges. She further referred to the thematic focus of the fourth evaluation round of the Convention on vulnerabilities to human trafficking, and measures taken by State parties to tackle them.

Day 1. Session 1 – Vulnerabilities to human trafficking and measures to prevent them, detect and support vulnerable victims, and punish the offenders

During the first session, panellists from the CoE, the OSCE, Albania, Finland, Greece, and Tajikistan shared reflections on different aspects of vulnerabilities to human trafficking and national responses in this regard.

Vulnerabilities should be a key consideration in prevention, prosecution, and protection; and the **First Vice-President of GRETA** stressed the importance of addressing both personal and situational vulnerabilities in the anti-trafficking responses. She presented the methodology followed by GRETA during the fourth evaluation round of the Convention, which contains questions related to preventing children's vulnerability to human trafficking, vulnerabilities related to the gender dimension of human trafficking and vulnerabilities of persons from disadvantaged minorities, persons with disabilities, asylum seekers, and migrant workers. Further, GRETA looks into online practices that may increase the risk of becoming a victim of trafficking and mechanisms to prevent the misuse of information and communication technology, as well as how policies and practices aimed at preventing human trafficking are informed by the experiences of victims and at-risk individuals.

The representatives of the OSCE OSR/CTHB presented the Office's work on vulnerabilities, particularly people with disabilities, minorities, and children. In the OSCE's 2021 survey¹, one third of the responded participating States indicated having had trafficking cases involving persons with disabilities. To help countries address the issue, a recent OSR/CTHB publication² explores links between disability and human trafficking, including disability as a vulnerability factor for trafficking, as a feature of exploitation, and as a result of trafficking. Drawing attention to another factor often overlooked in the THB context, the speakers highlighted the recent OSR/CTHB publication "Addressing the Dynamics of Trafficking in Persons Belonging to Minorities, including National Minorities"³. The publication provides recommendations on prevention and prosecution of trafficking in human beings belonging to minorities and on the need to ensure non-discriminatory approaches to identification,

¹ [Survey Report 2021 of Efforts to Implement OSCE Commitments and Recommended Actions to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings | OSCE](#)

² [Invisible victims: The nexus between disabilities and trafficking in human beings | OSCE](#)

³ [Out of the Shadows: Addressing the Dynamics of Trafficking in Persons Belonging to Minorities, including National Minorities | OSCE](#)

protection, assistance and support, and access to justice for victims belonging to minorities. The speakers further explored the nexus between child institutionalization and child trafficking, including as relates to the THB risks for children placed in institutions, the instances of children being trafficked out of institutions, the vulnerability of children who age out of institutions, and orphanage trafficking. As a follow-up to the publications released and to ensure intersectional and multi-stakeholder approach to vulnerabilities, the OSR/CTHB conducts workshops to foster understanding, dialogue, and co-operation between anti-trafficking actors and specialists working across different situations of vulnerability.

The National Anti-Trafficking Co-ordinator of Finland highlighted the efforts to improve the detection and identification of victims of THB for labour exploitation, which had resulted in an increased number of identified victims of this form of trafficking and stronger law enforcement response, as well as the confiscation of criminal proceeds. She underlined the importance of strong political will and recognizing the fight against human trafficking as a government priority as the crime distorts fair competition, weakens tax revenue, and threatens internal security. She also noted that the setting up of the position and office of National Anti-Trafficking Co-ordinator and mandating it to draft a National Action Plan through a participatory process taking into account the recommendations of Finland's National Anti-Trafficking Rapporteur and international organisations were key to strengthening anti-trafficking work. Removing the obstacles for trafficking victims to report a crime and seek help from the authorities without fear of immediate removal from the country by amending legislation, establishing a specialized police unit, and enhancing the labour inspectorate's mandate to carry out proactive monitoring at work sites and participate as experts at the courts of law were among the steps undertaken. Making the victim assistance system independent from the criminal proceedings by law promoted both victims' rights and the criminal justice process as victims help authorities know more about the crime and become more reliable witnesses. Furthermore, the efforts to mainstream anti-trafficking in all government policies resulted in new allies in the fight against human trafficking, such as tax authorities, integration and employment authorities, food security, and pension authorities thus enhancing the whole-of-society approach.

The Deputy Minister of the Interior and National Anti-Trafficking Co-ordinator of Albania noted that effective action begins by identifying the most vulnerable groups in society and crafting intervention strategies to reduce their vulnerability to trafficking. Children remain among the most at-risk groups, and ensuring their protection demands a framework that prioritizes their best interests. Recognizing this need, Albania has created a synergy between its child protection system and anti-trafficking efforts. The new Albanian National Referral Mechanism Agreement, effective since June 2023 and developed with OSCE support, exemplifies this approach. For the first time, the agreement includes the State Agency for

Children's Rights and Protection, as well as NGOs specializing in services for trafficked children, contributing disaggregated data on children's specific vulnerabilities and the protective measures in place. In July 2024, the Albanian government adopted the new National Action Plan for 2024-2025, also drafted with OSCE support. The plan includes specific objectives, indicators, and activities to safeguard children's rights from harmful practices such as early marriage and labour exploitation. The latter has been a particular focus, and notable progress has been made in developing a legal, operational, and monitoring framework to address the economic exploitation of children by enacting a new by-law, an action plan, and a data monitoring tool that aim to standardize reports and data collection on children in vulnerable situations. The speaker also outlined specific measures targeting other vulnerable groups in Albania, like Roma and Egyptian minorities as well as migrants and asylum seekers, underscoring the efforts to integrate anti-trafficking actions in laws and policies concerning social inclusion, foreigners, and asylum seekers.

The Secretary of the Inter-Ministerial Commission on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings of Tajikistan outlined the national anti-trafficking legislation, highlighting the added value of the Law "On Combating Human Trafficking and Assistance to Victims of Human Trafficking," which establishes the organizational and legal basis for combating human trafficking and contains measures to protect and assist victims of human trafficking. He further referred to statistics for 2019-2024, which showed 537 cases of trafficking in human beings involving criminals (131 women and 88 men) and 597 victims (173 women, 376 men and 48 children). He noted that while young women are recruited mainly for sexual exploitation, men are subjected to forced labour in other countries, and children are trafficked for illegal adoption domestically. The speaker stressed the efforts of the Inter-Ministerial Commission to conduct trainings and awareness-raising campaigns targeting children, youth, women, and labour migrants. Working groups established at the local level conduct household visits to inform the population in remote areas of the country, while targeted campaigns focus on markets, religious places, and transportation hubs. Particular attention is paid to prevention of labour exploitation of children during the cotton harvesting season, and the Ministry of Labour, Migration and Employment of the Population together with law enforcement agencies conducts annually over one hundred inspections in cotton-growing regions of the country. The speaker also highlighted the work to monitor online spaces in partnership with the Communications Service under the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan, and to develop a list of intermediaries offering employment abroad for further monitoring by anti-trafficking police.

The final panellist of the session, the **General Secretary for Vulnerable Persons and Institutional Protection from the Ministry of Migration and Asylum of Greece**, noted that human trafficking is often misunderstood, which is particularly problematic when it comes to

vulnerabilities, making the detection and prosecution of the crime highly complicated. To address the issue, the regulations for the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) in Greece specify vulnerabilities related to the recruitment, transportation, transfer, reception, and/or harbouring of a victim and those abused to control a victim during his/her exploitation, such as poverty or irregular residence. The speaker noted that 533 victims were reported to the NRM in 2023, of whom 433 were adults (including 258 women and 38 men as asylum applicants) and 100 children (including 37 girls and 25 boys as unaccompanied minors). The speaker referred to various steps taken by Greek authorities to prevent trafficking for labour exploitation, such as the regularization of undocumented migrants. Further, Greece established a national emergency response mechanism (NERM) to protect unaccompanied or homeless children, and children in difficult situations. Encompassing a tracing line, mobile units, info desks, and emergency accommodation facilities, the mechanism has so far provided support to over 5,000 children, of whom 288 were Ukrainian. While commending these measures, the speaker acknowledged challenges remain in ensuring a comprehensive, multi-faceted approach to identifying and addressing vulnerabilities. Against this backdrop, the country currently partners with the OSCE to enhance its 'social path' approach⁴.

During the discussion, a representative of **Liechtenstein** commended the recently launched OSCE papers on vulnerabilities, and drew attention to the integration of the Finance Against Slavery and Trafficking (FAST) initiative into the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Sustainable Finance Hub, working in collaboration with the Business and Human Rights Initiative. This transition positions FAST for further expansion and aims to galvanize the financial sector to combat THB. He invited all countries to join these efforts.

A representative of **Serbia** referred to developments in the country, including the appointment of new members of the Council for Combating Human Trafficking and a National Anti-Trafficking Co-ordinator, the adoption of a new National Action Plan, as well as the publication of the first report of the National Anti-Trafficking Rapporteur. The speaker also informed the audience about on-going work to develop a comprehensive anti-trafficking law, which would cover the identification of and assistance to victims of trafficking, as well as the non-punishment provision and victim compensation.

A representative of **France** drew attention to the country's third National Action Plan, which has a strong focus on the protection of children and enhancing criminal policies against trafficking networks. The Olympic Games hosted by France in the summer of 2024 provided

⁴ [Putting victims first: The 'social path' to identification and assistance | OSCE](#)

an opportunity to increase awareness on human trafficking. The speaker further noted the increased use of drugs and illegal medication to control victims.

A speaker from **Armenia** referred to the country's 7th National Action Plan, focusing on legislative reform, protection and support of victims. In Armenia, support services for victims are provided by the State and managed by NGOs, whose important role was stressed by the speaker. In formulating policies, special emphasis is placed on women and girls, enhancing their skills through training and education. Other prevention activities include awareness-raising and monitoring of digital spaces by law enforcement agencies.

Day 1. Session 2 – Enhancing national and regional anti-trafficking response: measures to increase impact (Discussions in working groups)

To discuss ways to enhance national and regional anti-trafficking efforts and increase their impact, participants were divided into three working groups, which reflected on a set of questions related to achieving longer-term sustainable results in combating human trafficking. The questions prompted the participants to reflect on what strategic interventions could help sustain effective anti-trafficking response vis-à-vis other national priorities and increasing challenges; how to increase or sustain political will; what anti-trafficking measures bring about the most impact and why; what steps could be taken to enhance the impact of the national and international anti-trafficking response; and whether there are any untapped or overlooked actors, resources, approaches, etc. that could be leveraged to enhance the impact of the anti-trafficking response.

The three working groups discussed these questions and reported back to the plenary. Underscoring the need to keep human trafficking high on national agendas, participants stressed the importance of elevating the position of a National Anti-Trafficking Co-ordinator to ensure its unifying and decision-making authority, establishing independent National Anti-Trafficking Rapporteurs with strong and specific mandates⁵, developing National Action Plans adaptable to emerging trends⁶, and engaging with parliaments⁷ to ensure sustainable and comprehensive anti-trafficking responses by law. Participants also brought up anti-trafficking architecture and governance, highlighting the need to link building blocks together and be clear who does what. They further stressed that designated budgets for implementation of the anti-trafficking National Action Plans are paramount for achieving better outcomes and impact.

⁵ See [Issue Brief - The role of independent National Rapporteurs or equivalent mechanisms in enhancing States' anti-trafficking responses | OSCE](#)

⁶ [Modernizing National Action Plans to Strengthen States' Anti-Trafficking Efforts | OSCE](#)

⁷ [Three Action Areas for Parliaments to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings | OSCE](#)

As combating human trafficking does not fit within one department box, participants brought up the importance of multi-agency co-operation at national, regional, and international levels. Cementing co-operation through legally binding agreements will help ensure continuity of collaboration between various stakeholders, including civil society organizations, which should be part of the design, drafting, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of anti-trafficking policies and action. Continuous engagement with and incorporating the expertise of survivors, including by establishing National Survivors of Trafficking Advisory Councils,⁸ are required for targeted, victim-centred, and trauma-informed national anti-trafficking responses.

On the topic of which anti-trafficking measures bring about the most impact at different levels, participants stressed the importance of measuring the impact of national anti-trafficking interventions and approaches, including by conducting independent evaluations. To facilitate the implementation of anti-trafficking legislation and commitments, participants suggested legal guidance be developed and made available to all stakeholders. Capacity-building efforts should involve regular mandate-specific anti-trafficking training in educational institutions at all levels for sustainability, awareness on emerging trends, and revitalization of attention. Participants noted the added value of multi-agency simulation-based training exercises as a tool to provide hands-on skills and knowledge and underscored the need for incorporating such training in the national capacity building efforts. Strong legal frameworks combined with solid anti-trafficking education and capacity-building efforts will enhance ownership among actors working to combat human trafficking. Participants also discussed the need to have customized approaches (for instance, for small States) and the added value of robust National Referral Mechanisms.

To enhance the impact of the national and international anti-trafficking response, participants highlighted the importance of research and data collection, and harmonization of work between agencies within a country to avoid duplication and allow for more efficient use of resources. Striking a balance between anti-trafficking specialisation (for instance, establishing specialized anti-trafficking police units) and mainstreaming anti-trafficking considerations in all relevant national laws and actions is key to ensuring a whole-of-society approach. The value of developing a comprehensive anti-trafficking law was stressed to help consolidate States' anti-trafficking efforts across 4Ps, including human rights-based, victim-centred, gender-sensitive, trauma-informed, and age-appropriate approaches; provide for the establishment/enhancement of the anti-trafficking architecture (National Anti-Trafficking Co-

⁸ [Guidance on establishing and maintaining National Survivors of Trafficking Advisory Councils \(NSTACs\) | OSCE](#)

ordinator, Rapporteur, Anti-Trafficking Commission/Task Force, State-led National Referral Mechanism); and specify the roles of State agencies and other stakeholders. Such a law should provide clarity on terminology, enable the development and implementation of anti-trafficking National Action Plans, and establish the basis for international co-operation in the field. The law should also serve as a key point of reference for incorporating anti-trafficking considerations into other pieces of national legislation, e.g. related to technology, supply chain, various vulnerable groups, among others.

Further, participants identified overlooked actors, resources, and approaches to be leveraged to enhance the impact of the anti-trafficking response, such as trade unions, businesses, including ICT companies, prison and probation services, the financial sector, and social media influencers. The potential of AI was brought up, with a good practice of using an AI hub in the prevention of child sexual abuse coming out of Estonia. To pilot new partnerships and initiatives, the Netherlands have established ‘field labs’ – experimental groups where multi-disciplinary collaboration could be fostered by experts engaging beyond their agency mandates. Parliaments and diasporas were also mentioned as actors that could be leveraged to advance the anti-trafficking response. Overall, there is a need for diversification of actors who can formally recognize and support trafficking victims.

Day 2. Session 3 – Engaging and integrating the expertise of survivors of trafficking for policy and practice impact

The chair of the ODIHR International Survivors of Trafficking Advisory Council (ISTAC) commended the OSCE and ODIHR leadership in setting up ISTAC and emphasized that it is crucial to involve survivors in the entire spectrum of anti-trafficking policy-making and activities, including fundraising efforts as survivors can help advocate for appropriate resources to be allocated for anti-trafficking work. The speaker also underlined that survivors are not just their stories and it is important to avoid neglecting things that survivors achieved. In practical terms, it is important to ensure survivors are properly introduced at events, treated as experts, and remunerated for their work.

The Vice-Chair of ISTAC highlighted the importance of mandatory training for first line responders, including medical practitioners, educators, and police to recognize signs of trafficking and abuse, underscoring that survivors can help in such an effort, including by introducing a trauma-informed approach. She further noted the need to guarantee unconditional support to trafficking survivors, regardless of their readiness to co-operate with law enforcement authorities.

Both ISTAC representatives highlighted the importance of setting up National Survivors of Trafficking Advisory Councils (NSTACs), which can support policy- and legislation-making, training, and awareness-raising. Referring to governments' reluctance to provide funding for such councils, the speakers underlined that in the long run, the engagement of survivors will improve identification, assistance, prevention and prosecution, and thus be beneficial to the authorities' efforts to combat human trafficking.

The Director General for the Law Enforcement Directorate of Public Safety Canada noted that while most human trafficking cases are for the purpose of sexual exploitation, Canada has seen an increase in labour exploitation, especially in low-wage communities. In 2019, the Government launched a National Strategy to Combat Human Trafficking, which has five pillars: prevention, protection, prosecution, partnerships, and empowerment. The speaker underlined the importance of ensuring that victims and survivors are continually engaged in the development and implementation of the strategy, while its empowerment pillar provides for supporting victims and survivors to regain control and independence and encouraging action by industry partners. She underscored the commitment to establish a survivor advisory committee to better inform Canada's response and enhance trauma-informed, culturally-relevant support services for victims and survivors. She further presented the "Reclaim" programme operating in Toronto, which supports survivors of human trafficking by working with banks, telecommunication companies, car rental companies, and property managers to remove fraudulent and coercive debt from the victim's name, and ensuring that survivors are not re-victimized by a process that requires them to re-tell their stories to strangers. Ontario's anti-human trafficking strategy 2020-2025 is another example of a policy document developed with the input from survivors, indigenous communities and organizations, law enforcement, and frontline service providers. As the government is renewing the National Strategy, Canada will prioritize developing a victim-centred and survivor-informed approach, addressing systematic challenges and emerging forms of human trafficking, supporting at-risk populations, and employing international best practices and technological advancements.

The Anti-Trafficking Co-ordinator of Republika Srpska, Bosnia and Herzegovina, presented the anti-trafficking mechanism established for the purpose of co-ordination of activities and implementing the measures of the anti-trafficking Action Plan of the Republika Srpska. The mechanism encompasses six regional monitoring teams that include prosecutors and police and collaborate with NGOs and international partners. The speaker highlighted the role of an NGO established by trafficking survivors, which has a unique position in providing support and assistance to victims, advocating for their rights, facilitating their rehabilitation and reintegration in the society, and raising awareness on human trafficking. By providing a safe space for survivors to share their experiences, access their rights and social services, and

obtain relevant guidelines for improving their safety and quality of life, the NGO is a vital support to those who have survived or are at risk of human trafficking for the purpose of labour exploitation.

A joint presentation by the United States Ambassador-at-large to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons and a former U.S. Advisory Council member outlined the key steps that allowed the U.S. government to formally integrate survivors' expertise into its anti-trafficking efforts. A 2003 survivor-led grassroots initiative in California expanded in 2011 to a National Survivor Network, which prioritized advocating for survivors to be at the forefront of efforts to combat human trafficking in terms of programmes, services, and policies, aiming at the creation of a Survivor Advisory Council. Following a 2012 White House event focused on survivor engagement, the Network partnered with the government to develop the Survivor Empowerment Act and advocated that Congress pass this law to create the U.S. Advisory Council, which it did in 2015. The 2015 Presidential appointment of 11 survivors with diverse backgrounds to the Council was a crucial step. As any new initiative, the establishment of the Council required an adjustment period for governmental agencies to engage operationally and, importantly, to set up a system of trauma-informed support for the Council, including by dedicating necessary resources. The broad mandate of the Council required its members to learn about the work and distinctions between federal and state agencies, and the complicated nature of how and when the two levels of government interact and co-ordinate for anti-trafficking purposes to be able to submit annual reports with the Council's assessments and recommendations to improve the federal anti-trafficking response. Further challenges included the need to build clear communication and mutual understanding, and to be compensated by the government for the work the Council members do – allowed by a legal amendment adopted in 2020. The speakers noted federal agencies now reach out to the Council and proactively seek advice on anti-trafficking efforts. They further shared key considerations on engaging persons with lived experience of human trafficking, such as the need to be trauma-informed before engaging survivors and recognize that survivor leaders are equipped to advise on adapting efforts and ensuring appropriate, effective, and uninterrupted services for victims and survivors; incorporate survivor input early in the design, development, implementation, and evaluation of anti-trafficking policies, training, and advocacy efforts; and outlining clear goals, expectations, and timelines for survivor input on projects. In this regard, the speakers encouraged the audience to consult the introduction section of the U.S. State Department's 2022 Trafficking in Persons Report, with recommendations on survivor engagement in the anti-trafficking field and is a product of collaboration with survivor leaders, as well as the OSCE/ODIHR guidance on establishing and maintaining National Survivors of Trafficking Advisory Councils.

During the discussions, a representative of **Norway** noted that researchers in the country have engaged with survivors to learn about ways to enhance assistance provided by authorities, and several shelters have established victim councils to discuss support measures provided. However, he noted that many trafficking victims leave the country and that more needs to be done to incorporate victims' feedback.

A representative of **the Netherlands** noted the engagement of survivors through roundtables and other activities to implement the country's National Action Plan, underscoring the need of doing so in a more meaningful way. She further raised the importance of a trauma-informed approach to ensure survivors are ready for a new role.

A representative of **Bulgaria** stressed that retelling their stories is often a very traumatizing experience for survivors and media interviews could be an invasion in their personal space. While some countries might not yet be ready to establish survivor councils, as a first step the speaker suggested to formalize the engagement with survivors in the national policies for combating human trafficking.

Responding to the point raised by the Bulgarian representative, the Chair of ISTAC shared that in her personal experience, it took years to be able to speak about her story and stressed the importance of giving survivors time. The former U.S. Advisory Council member offered reflections on how survivor engagement can be connected to media training on how to tell stories more efficiently and how to translate stories into community awareness.

Day 2. Session 4 – Strengthening access to justice and effective remedies for victims of trafficking

The Second Vice-President of GRETA offered perspectives from the stocktaking of GRETA's third evaluation round, which had a thematic focus on access to justice and effective remedies for trafficking victims. In his presentation, he focused on victims' access to legal assistance, free legal aid, compensation, the criminal justice response, and the application of the non-punishment provision. He referred to some promising practices across State Parties, such as victims being entitled to free legal aid regardless of the level of their income and irrespective of their immigration status, the establishment of networks of trained lawyers specialised to represent trafficking victims, and prosecutors supporting victims to obtain compensation within criminal proceedings through, for instance, asset freezing measures. GRETA's stocktaking also revealed numerous challenges, such as the timeliness of granting access to legal assistance and free legal aid; lack of access to legal aid for all victims, lengthy procedures for access to legal aid, as well as lack of adequate funding and specialized

lawyers. As regards compensation to trafficking victims, challenges include shortcomings in financial investigations; lengthy and complex civil proceedings; issues with enforcing compensation awarded by courts; and rare application of State compensation schemes in practice. The speaker highlighted an increase in the number of countries that have adopted specific legal provisions or guidance on the non-punishment of trafficking victims, while underscoring remaining challenges due to the limited scope of the provision, its narrow interpretation, and gaps in victim identification. The speaker also noted low numbers of prosecutions and convictions in human trafficking cases, particularly those for labour exploitation, and requalification of human trafficking cases as other offences; high emphasis on victims' testimony and excessive length of criminal proceedings; difficulties with investigation and prosecution of trafficking cases committed or facilitated online as well as lack of training and specialization of prosecutors and judges.

The National Rapporteur on Human Trafficking of Portugal presented his country's approach to combating THB, which among other includes two protocols to define the procedures for detection, identification, and protection of victims of trafficking (one for adults and one for children). The Support and Protection Network for Victims of Trafficking (RAPVT) and five regional multi-disciplinary teams established in the country provide for co-operation, information sharing, identification and referral of victims, as well as data collection. The speaker mentioned that lawyers are available at international airports to provide legal advice to foreign nationals stopped at the border, which could help identify victims, and the availability of online access to the application for legal aid. Further, he highlighted a 2023 directive by the General Prosecutor's Office, instructing prosecutors to pay special attention to vulnerable victims and to file compensation claims on behalf of victims. In 2021, the Government approved a new model of documenting the status of especially vulnerable victims, including THB victims, ensuring documents provided to victims are clear, simple, and easy to understand. Prosecutors and judges receive initial and ongoing training on human trafficking in the Judicial Studies Centre, while broader capacity-building efforts involve police, labour inspectors, social workers, staff of NGOs, and other stakeholders likely to come into contact with trafficking victims.

The Head of the Independent Reporting Office on Human Trafficking at the German Institute for Human Rights highlighted the absence of a uniform National Referral Mechanism in the country, while there are five co-operation concepts or agreements at the federal level and co-operation agreements in 13 of the 16 federal states. The Institute's analysis has revealed gaps in these agreements, for example, only eight states cover labour exploitation, only one state covers other forms of exploitation, and only four states mention minors in their agreements. The speaker indicated that such a heterogeneous situation

hinders victim identification and access to assistance. She outlined the Institute's recommendations to the Government, including the development of a national standard/guideline for federal states that takes into account all rights of victims and international obligations, and strengthening the role and mandate of victim support organizations and the public social service providers, especially in the identification process. Referring to trafficking case law analysis, the speaker stressed the need for training of judges. The speaker further referred to the revision of the social compensation law enacted in 2024, which clarified that all THB cases are covered by the definition of psychological violence and introduced a simplified, low-threshold procedure ensuring the services of a trauma outpatient clinic. Underscoring the need for continuous monitoring of implementation of the law with the involvement of affected individuals, she laid out recommendations relating to training for relevant authorities and collecting relevant data.

The Secretary General of the National Human Rights Institution of Luxembourg, which fulfils the role of independent National Anti-Trafficking Rapporteur, provided a short overview of the trafficking situation in the country, highlighting the observed shift towards trafficking for labour exploitation and online recruitment. She referred to the 2023 reform of the law on the legal profession, which improved accessibility of legal aid for people with modest income. However, the speaker underscored that much more needs to be done, including by delinking assistance to victims from their co-operation with authorities, establishing victim and witness protection programmes, and removing procedural obstacles to compensation. The issue of compensation was analysed in the Rapporteur's recent report to the Parliament, which highlighted, among others, lack of information, complicated parallel procedures to be initiated by victims, especially in cases of labour exploitation, and insufficient training of justice professionals on the scale of damage suffered by victims and the need to use expertise to assess it. Welcoming the 2022 adoption of a new law that provides for a mechanism to recover assets through confiscation, the speaker noted its limited scope with regard to trafficking cases and the need for proper information and legal assistance for victims to benefit from it. A bill is currently under discussion, which is intended to establish procedural rights and guarantees for minors who are victims or witnesses of a criminal offence, such as limiting the interviews of minors to what is strictly necessary, and holding interviews in premises designed or adapted for this purpose by specially trained officers.

The Chair of the selection panel for the establishment of the European Prosecutors Office and former President of the Regional High Court of Leoben in Austria stressed the need to provide trafficking victims and witnesses an environment that encourages them to co-operate with law enforcement authorities. The speaker noted a decree by the Ministry of

Justice aimed at raising awareness of prosecutors on the non-punishment provision; provisions of the criminal procedure law enabling hearing of victims and witnesses in absence of the alleged perpetrators, the application of child-sensitive procedures, and recording of the interviews to be used in all further steps of judicial procedures. She further underscored the need for trained professionals, including police, judiciary, and victim support organizations and the added value of multi-agency collaboration to address THB at national and international levels.

Closing remarks

In her concluding remarks, the **Executive Secretary of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings** expressed gratitude to the participants' engagement throughout the two days and highlighted the need to sustain political commitment and broader societal involvement at the national and international levels. **The OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings** also expressed her gratitude to the participants for the fruitful discussions and the work they do. Underlining the importance of a whole-of-society approach, mobilized political will and resources, and sustained anti-trafficking governance, she applauded the promising practices discussed during the meeting. As a final remark, she reiterated that National Rapporteur and National Co-ordinators are all resources for each other, and that both the OSCE and the Council of Europe are ready to support them.