



# STABILITY PACT FOR SOUTH EASTERN EUROPE TASK FORCE ON TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS

## Conclusions and Progress Report 6<sup>th</sup> Anti-Trafficking Meeting, Belgrade, 23-24 March 2004

### Working Table III Meeting, Portoroz, 7 June 2004

Over two hundred participants from South Eastern Europe, Western Europe, and from as far away as the United States and Israel met on the 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> of March 2004 in Belgrade at the 6<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Stability Pact Task Force on Trafficking in Human Beings (SPTF). The aim of the meeting was to bring together representatives and experts to develop and coordinate anti-trafficking efforts in the region. It gathered the main actors central to the fight against human trafficking, both from countries of the region and from donor countries as well as representatives of international organizations, local and international NGOs and law enforcement authorities to provide a forum for discussion and information exchange with a view to initiating, streamlining and coordinating future activities.

The Meeting opened with an evening session on 23 March dedicated to introducing the issue of **trafficking for forced and bonded labour**. While this form of human trafficking often gets less attention than sex trafficking, countries need to be aware of its existence and ready to respond appropriately as required by the Palermo Protocol and other international instruments and standards. A detailed presentation of this subject was presented by relevant international and nongovernmental partner organizations of the SPTF and a description and assessment of how mechanisms can cause people to get trapped and how they ought to work in order to counteract it was given. In addition, the links involving trafficking for forced and bonded labour originating in SEE and destined for other parts of the world were established.

The 6<sup>th</sup> SPTF Meeting also gave special attention to the issue of **trafficking in children** and minors. This attention is especially timely because traffickers increasingly are targeting younger and younger victims and governments and nongovernmental organizations must strengthen and adapt their specific responses to this trend to be effective. Thousands of children and minors are targeted by organized crime for trafficking into sexual exploitation or such activities as begging, stealing and other criminal activities such as the market of pornography. Although solid data is not available, some NGOs working in this field have estimated that up to 30 percent of the trafficking victims in the region are children. Tragically, it is believed that these numbers may increase as traffickers seek to provide increasingly younger girls for sexual exploitation, especially those marketed or sold as virgins, in connection with the fear of HIV/AIDS.

Current responses to child trafficking are not adequate. It requires specialized responses. Treating trafficked children in exactly the same way as adults are treated is inappropriate. For example, countries must prepare responses for situations when it may be detrimental or dangerous to reunite the child with his or her family because the family sold the child to traffickers or was complicit in the trafficking to begin with. Government officials, law enforcement and non-governmental service providers need to review their responses to human trafficking to see how to best adapt those responses to the needs of children and minors. For that reason the SPTF had called upon the countries of the region to develop **comprehensive National Plans of Action against child trafficking** and to implement them as rapidly as possible.

Beginning at last year's Task Force Meeting in Portorož, Slovenia, the SPTF began laying the foundation for work on this aspect of human trafficking across the region. Within its role as a catalyst for meaningful anti-trafficking measures in South Eastern Europe and beyond, the SPTF supported the setting up of **multidisciplinary subgroups** to the national working groups in each of the countries in order to **address trafficking in children and minors** effectively.

The meeting was a valuable logical next step combining country presentations and discussion on current responses to child trafficking and included:

- Country presentations on the status of development of National Plans of Action against Trafficking in Children and Minors.
- Dialogue about the special steps that are needed to adapt responses for those girls and boys who were trafficked when they were under 18 years old.
- Updates of progress of a number of specific initiatives have been undertaken by SPTF implementing partners UNICEF, ILO/IPEC, IOM, Save the Children, also in close cooperation with Terre des Hommes and other International Organizations and NGOs.

The broad set of actions reported is the concrete follow-up to commitments made at the most recent Ministerial Forum in December 2003 in Sofia, where Ministers of Justice and Interior of South Eastern Europe committed their governments by signing the **Sofia Declaration** to establish comprehensive action plans on combating child trafficking, to develop specific child trafficking strategies and activities and to implement them:

- Develop and adopt minimum standards for the treatment of child victims of trafficking based upon the guidelines developed by UNICEF in accordance with other international and non-governmental organizations;
- Systematically collect data on child trafficking;
- Take all necessary measures to establish effective procedures for the rapid identification of child trafficking victims; and
- Adapt special referral procedures to assist and protect trafficked children involving all relevant institutions, agencies and authorities.

The presentations of both ECPAT Netherlands: *Joint East West Research on Trafficking in Children for Sexual Purposes in Europe: The Sending Countries* and UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre in Florence provided highly valuable input on the subject of child trafficking and brought out the dimension of the problem in clear relief.

The 6<sup>th</sup> SPTF meeting also reviewed the progress on other parts of the SPTF's Comprehensive Anti-Trafficking Framework in the region. For example, updates on the countries' legal provisions regarding **temporary residence permits** for victims of human trafficking and the status of implementation (progress/problems/gaps) and on their responsibilities to provide for the safety of **trafficking victims**, especially those **who agree to act as witnesses** against the traffickers.

The Chair of the SPTF indicated appreciation to donor countries for their involvement and their welcomed contributions. She urged them, however, to recognize that several years of work has been done on the issue in the region already and to ensure that contributions are better used to build upon the good work that has been done already in the past several years rather than to start all over again to reinvent the wheel.

Participants agreed to focus on the implementation of the following next steps for this year as part of the comprehensive operational anti-trafficking framework:

- Introducing and further exploring within the region the labour dimensions of human trafficking (trafficking for forced and bonded labour and services). Awareness raising on the issue and support the development of appropriate responses to it;
- Enforcement of the established national and regional anti-trafficking structures (multidisciplinary working groups, implementation of national plans of action including for combating child trafficking, strengthen national anti-trafficking governmental coordinators etc.);
- Establishment of 'Twinning Programs' between so-called donor and recipient countries on curbing child trafficking;
- Mainstreaming of the trainings for police, the judiciary and the prosecutors on human trafficking;
- Develop special sections on child trafficking for inclusion into our existing training curricula;
- Implementation of temporary residence for victims of trafficking in SEE countries;
- Establishment of 3<sup>rd</sup> Country Resettlement Agreements for victim/witnesses of human trafficking from SEE countries;
- Support the setting up of a Regional Association of NGOs dealing with human trafficking;
- Promoting the rapid implementation of victim/witness protection programs;
- Forming a new initiative to train and provide private lawyers to victims of trafficking. SPTF has been in early development discussions on this with the American Bar Association (ABA-CEELI) and ICMPD;
- Crafting with NATO the development of its anti-trafficking policy; and
- The SPTF Media Program.

The SPTF will continue to support, streamline and monitor the implementation of the regional projects in order to ensure the achievement of meaningful results and the exposure of inadequate national and regional responses to this horrible crime and human rights violation.

### **A NEW ERA IN REGIONAL ANTI-TRAFFICKING LEADERSHIP AND COORDINATION FOR SOUTH EASTERN EUROPE**

With the appointment of the Chair of the SPTF as OSCE Special Representative on Human Trafficking, a new era of regional leadership in addressing trafficking in human beings in South Eastern Europe has started. Since 2000, when the Stability Pact Task Force on Trafficking in Human Beings (SPTF) was created and established under the auspices of the OSCE, it has led the way in the development of a comprehensive regional strategic framework and in establishing institutional mechanisms for the fight against human trafficking.

Also, after four years of intensive work, the SPTF will begin the process of turning over more responsibility and accountability for continued regional progress in anti-trafficking management to the governmental coordinators and the respective governments.

As part of their responsibilities for working with all of the 55 OSCE participating States OSCE, the Special Representative and the Anti-Trafficking Assistance Unit will serve as a resource for the countries of SEE. These efforts will go forward in close collaboration and with the support of other OSCE Institutions including the Strategic Police Matters Unit (SPMU), the Senior Adviser on Gender Issues, the Anti-Trafficking Unit in the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), the Office of the Coordinator for OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities (OCEEA) and the OSCE field missions. In addition SEE countries will continue to receive the valuable support of international partners, in particular of the members of the SPTF Expert Coordination Team.

During the upcoming months, the SPTF will take additional steps to strengthen the collaborative capacity of the governmental coordinators and the national structures on a regional basis, ensure the implementation of the SPTF's Media Project, and produce a chronicle of regional progress and accomplishments during the SPTF's tenure. The SPTF Secretariat in Vienna is expected to close its doors by October 2004. In this transition period, also the modalities for continued SP support for national and regional efforts to combat trafficking will be defined.