

Summary of the briefing on Global Partnership against Slavery and Trafficking in Human Beings in the 21st century

On 2 November 2005 the Permanent Mission of Belarus to the United Nations held a briefing on a Global Partnership against Slavery and Trafficking in Human Beings in the 21st century.

The event was held at the United Nations Headquarters and was attended by more than 30 representatives of Member States, UN agencies, international organisations, civil society and mass media.

Ambassador Andrei Dapkiunas, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Belarus to the United Nations, outlined the proposals on the ways of improving coordination of international efforts to combat trafficking in human beings within the framework of a Global Partnership against Slavery and Trafficking in Human Beings in the 21st century proposed by Belarus (non-paper is attached).

The participants exchanged opinions on possible ways of developing cooperation under the aegis of the United Nations with a view to curtail human trafficking.

The proposal to form a Global Partnership embracing a large range of international actors engaged in combating trafficking in human beings was characterised in general as a timely and appropriate step.

Some participants took interest in joining a core group of countries, UN agencies, international and non-governmental organisations for advancing the human trafficking agenda within the United Nations and other international organisations and fora. On this point, it was noted that non-governmental organisations as important players and valuable contributors to the combating of human trafficking should be duly allowed to contribute to the work of the core group.

The briefing highlighted the multidimensional nature of trafficking in human beings and the need for the comprehensive attention to be paid to all aspects of the phenomenon, including gender, migration and age factors.

Current resolutions of the General Assembly and other UN bodies on human trafficking place particular emphasis on the threat of trafficking in persons to young women and girls who are main victims of this criminal activity. Some speakers indicated that this emphasis may be reflected in an *omnibus* resolution on the issue as well as reflected within the framework of the proposed Global Partnership.

The UN agencies and associated international organisations welcomed the idea of enhancing interagency coordination under the aegis of the United Nations to ensure an effective and targeted international response to human trafficking.

The Permanent Observer for International Organisation for Migration to the United Nations drew attention to a possibility of integrating a coordination mechanism on human trafficking into a special task force or interagency group on migration. The idea of setting up such an interagency institution can be carefully studied in the context of preparation for the High-level dialogue on International Migration and Development of the 61st session of the United Nations General Assembly in September 2006.

Some participants stressed that the High-level dialogue could be a relevant forum to address the challenges of trafficking in persons. To generate the political will needed to move the agenda forward a special debate on human trafficking would be brought to the format of the high level meeting.

The representative of the New York Office of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) informed about the panel on human trafficking during high-level meeting on the occasion of International Day of Abolishing Slavery to be held on 2 December 2005 in New York under the sponsorship of UNODC, United Nations Development Fund for Women and other partners. Famous politicians, artists and other eminent persons will attend the event. The UNODC plans to introduce the actress Julia Ormond as a good-will ambassador on human trafficking.

The UNODC also attracted attention of participants to its intention to launch a global report on human trafficking in 2006. The report will provide international community with overall statistical and factual data which can be conducive to the purposes of the Global Partnership.

The UN agencies and country representatives advised to bring advocacy measures to the focus of the Global Partnership. Proactive advocacy efforts and awareness-raising campaigns among potential victims are seen by many international actors as an indispensable instrument for preventing human trafficking and mobilizing global support against the phenomenon.

The representative of the International Labour Organization informed about the Report of the ILO Director-General entitled "A Global Alliance against forced labour" issued in 2005. The forced labour is closely linked to trafficking in persons. In this regard a Global Alliance against Forced Labour and Global Partnership against Slavery and Trafficking in Human Beings in the 21st century may become mutually reinforcing international movements.

Trafficking in children is a most heinous crime. The protection of children is to be in the heart of all international efforts to eradicate trafficking in human beings and protect trafficked victims. UNICEF intends to tackle the problem of trafficking in children within the human rights-based approach to its activities. Greater unity of actions of the international community at the level of the core group would create a good possibility for the better protection of children in emergencies, armed conflicts and other situations that make them vulnerable to trafficking.

The representative of the Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights shared the concern about the problem of human trafficking, especially with its impact on human rights. The UNOHCHR is supportive of any proposal that may generate impetus for stopping violations of human rights connected with trafficking.

The representative also noted that in 2004 the United Nations Human Rights Commission established a post of Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially in women and children. This thematic procedure should be effectively used in the global combat against trafficking.

In conclusion, the Permanent Representative of Belarus assured of the intention of Belarus to continue consultations with all interested parties in order to arrive at a tangible result with respect to the launching of a Global Partnership. The core group is viewed as an open flexible mechanism of like-minded countries, UN agencies, international organisations and NGOs that have ideas, experience and suggestions from human apolitical perspective how to promote partnership and cooperation in the area of eliminating trafficking in persons and the demand for trafficked victims. The delegation of Belarus promised to invite all interested parties to the next less formal and action-oriented meetings.